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JOHN BUNYAN

IN RELATION TO HIS TIMES

BY

EDMUND ARBUTHNOTT KNOX
D.D.
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SACRÆ THEOLOGIÆ PROFESSORI

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D.D.

EDMUNDUS ARBUTHNOTT KNOX

EPISCOPUS OLIM MANCUNIENSIS

'The blessed work of helping the world forward, happily does not wait to be done by perfect men; and I should imagine that neither Luther nor John Bunyan, for example, would have satisfied the modern demand for an ideal hero, who believes nothing but what is true, feels nothing but which is exalted, and does nothing but what is graceful. The real heroes of God's making are quite different.'

GEORGE ELIOT,
Scenes of Clerical Life.

PREFACE

A NEW book on John Bunyan needs an apology. The tercentenary of his birth has called forth a stream of excellent works. The tale of the 'inspired tinker' has been told from many points of view. When the editor of the *Record* invited me to write a few articles, as that journal's contribution to the Tercentenary Celebration of Bunyan's birth, inclination to assist was set against fear of adding to the danger of surfeiting public interest even in so wonderful a story as this. But in looking through recent works it seemed that room was left for a delineation of the spiritual and political problems that environed the author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress.' It is true that the Bible was his library for a long time, as far as printed books went. But there was also a library of Nature and of human beings, in both of which he was a diligent and proficient student. The theological discussions in 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' which are to us unnatural excrescences, were to him part of the very texture and stuff of his tale. Common folk of the seventeenth century loved theology, talked theology. They took as vivid an interest in it as do their descendants to-day in sporting events or the melodrama of the cinema. Church fellowship was an absorbing and glorious reality.

It seemed therefore desirable to sketch, if only in bare outline, those conditions of our Church-and-State history which made a theologian out of a tinker, and the more so because the seventeenth century was, as Carlyle has pointed out, our last heroic age. To have depicted all its great men was a task far beyond my powers, and would have crowded my canvas unduly. So I have confined myself to a few of the protagonists in that great conflict, again not telling the story of their lives, but illustrating from their works the part which they took, their contributions to a spiritual drama which is far from being finished. We are heirs to-day of the conflict between authority for the sake of efficiency and liberty for the sake of truth.

If a personal note may be pardoned, I would add mention of the debt which, under God, I owe to the author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' the first book that, in my boyhood, brought religion for me out of the region of confused mystery into that of practical reality, and gave purpose and meaning to life.

E. A. Knox
(formerly Bishop of Manchester).

Shortlands,
December 1928.

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JOHN BUNYAN IN RELATION TO HIS TIMES

CHAPTER I

THE ELIZABETHAN SETTLEMENT

Puritan critics. Calvin and his influence.

To others shall be left the story of Bunyan's life, the full appreciation of his character, his literary gifts, and his spiritual force. Our contribution to his tercentenary shall be an attempt to outline the great religious and political problems in the solution of which he was called by God to take his part. He was neither statesman, philosopher, nor priest in Holy Orders, but he was the Amos of his day, the peasant prophet and preacher. In that capacity he contributed his share to currents of thought that still pulse in the veins of his countrymen's spiritual life. He sought nothing but the salvation of souls, and in that quest his work was abundantly honoured, and is still honoured to-day. But men who go about their work with simplicity and singleness of aim become consciously or unconsciously embodiments of ideals. They are caught up, as it were, into the purposes of God, purposes not wrought out in a single lifetime, nor even in many generations. They are given a real share in making world history.

Our endeavour will be to read John Bunyan's story as a chapter in the tale, the still unfinished tale, of the English Reformation. In the hundred and ten years between the accession of Elizabeth and the revolution which expelled the Stuart dynasty, men and women will interest us as exponents of principles, not always aware of what their principles involved, nor able to reduce them completely to practice. Significant acts and words will furnish us with clues, clues not selected at random but consistent with the detailed narrative, which may, and we hope will, be sought and followed by those whom we have the good fortune to interest. Can it fail to be so, if Carlyle was right in calling the seventeenth century 'the last heroic age'?

It was the fate of Queen Elizabeth to build on the ruins rather than the foundations of the work of her father, brother, and sister. Each of them had pulled down the edifice of his or her predecessor: Henry the Papal and monastic Church, Edward his father's doctrinally unreformed Church, and Mary her brother's Church. There had been much absolutism and much cruelty. The sovereign's will had dictated the nation's religion. Elizabeth, as imperious in disposition as the rest of her family, had in a far greater measure than any of them the prosperity of England at her heart. Shakespeare, prophesying after the event, puts into Cranmer's mouth this forecast of her reign:

> 'She shall be loved and fear'd: her own shall bless her;
> Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,
> And hang their heads with sorrow: good grows with her:

In her days every man shall eat in safety,
Under his own vine, what he plants; and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.'

No truthful historian will claim for Elizabeth perfection of character. But she had the quality which leads Englishmen to overlook many faults in their rulers—sincere devotion to the welfare of her country and determination that her country should stand high among the nations of the world. To rulers so minded England is indulgent, and Elizabeth was so minded.

It was the practice of the Tudor sovereigns to claim Parliamentary support for their religious policy. When Elizabeth came to the throne the English Church was once more in full communion with Rome, and recognised the Pope as its spiritual Head. The statutes of Henry VIII which had replaced the Papal supremacy by the Royal, had been repealed soon after the accession of Mary.[1] Public worship was in the Latin tongue, the Mass was sung in Latin in all churches, and the whole unreformed faith and worship were the statutory religion of the English nation. Religion established by statute could be altered only by statute.

The whole position is made more clear by contrasting the decisions of Convocation with those of Parliament. Convocation, the sacred Synod, the voice of the Bishops and clergy, on Elizabeth's accession forthwith declared in favour of Transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass, and the supremacy of the Pope. It condemned all interference by the laity with the faith, worship, or discipline of the Church. There was no doubt as to the opinion of those who claimed to be the successors of the Apostles, no doubt as to the mind

[1] By 1 and 2 Philip and Mary.

of the Priesthood. If these were to determine the faith of the English Church, it was to be a Roman and not a Protestant Church.

This decision of Convocation was unhesitatingly rejected by Parliament. There was indeed strong opposition to the new legislation in the House of Lords. The majority in favour of the Act of Supremacy was a very narrow majority, but it was sufficient. By the Act of Supremacy not only was all foreign jurisdiction over the Church of England abolished, but all ecclesiastical jurisdiction and superiority was 'united and annexed to the imperial Crown of this realm'; all officers, spiritual and temporal, were to take oath that 'according to their conscience the Queen was supreme governor in all causes spiritual as well as temporal.' Whatever explanations were afterwards offered—and such explanations are to be found in the Thirty-seventh Article—the fact remained that, without regard to Convocation, the Papal supremacy over the Church of England was utterly abolished, and a large amount of ecclesiastical power, including the right of appointment to bishoprics and deaneries, passed into the hands of the Crown. So much for the Act of Supremacy.

By the Act of Uniformity (1559) all existing books of public worship, missals included, passed out of use. In lieu thereof the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI, with three changes,[1] became the only lawful form of public worship. For the Mass was substituted the Holy Communion, and Archbishop Whitgift, the great opponent of the Puritans, was able to say to

[1] 'The addition of certain lessons to be used on every Sunday in the year, and the Form of the Litany altered and corrected, and two sentences only added in the delivery of the Sacrament to the communicants.' The so-called Ornaments Rubric was added, though not mentioned in the Act.

them that: 'Not the simplest and most ignorant Papist could mistake the Communion for the Mass.' (Could Whitgift's successor at Lambeth make this statement with equal confidence to-day?) But more important for our purpose than the revolutionary changes made by adoption of the Second Prayer Book was the authority by which they were made, the authority of Parliament in defiance of the sacred synod of Convocation.

Power to enforce the Act of Uniformity was placed in the hands of Judges of Assize, Mayors, and other lay officers, to whom was given authority not only to punish recalcitrant laity, but also to fine, imprison, and, if necessary, deprive disobedient clergy. It is true that the Act calls on ecclesiastical authorities, as they have to make answer in the great Day of Judgment, to execute its provisions. But in case this admonition should fail, the ordinary officers of the Crown must see to it that the Act is not a dead letter. Again behind them stands a forecast of the terrible court, afterwards known as the Court of High Commission, lay in its authority, and predominantly lay in its composition, and having no ecclesiastical sanction save that which was conferred on it by the Royal Supremacy.

Now the Parliament that made these changes was not, so far as the House of Commons is concerned, very different in personnel from the last Parliament of Queen Mary. The Tudors had hitherto been able to manipulate Parliaments as they pleased. Now that they were rid of the rival power of the Papacy in England, and such obstacles as Papal authority might offer to their sovereignty, was the road open to absolutism? Was the Church of England to become

what the Churches of France and Spain became—servile Churches, and tools of despotism—or, if not, what was the power that should arise to restrain them?

England's deliverance from the catastrophe of a servile Church in a servile nation is largely due, under God, to the influence and work of John Calvin. Calvin is little known to the ordinary Englishman, or even the ordinary clergyman. On the shelves of a prominent theological college there stand, or stood some years ago, thirty or forty uncut volumes of Calvin's works, and at the end of the row a thin slim booklet entitled 'Refutation of Calvin.' In the 'Cambridge Modern History' is a bibliography to the chapter on Calvin in which are enumerated only eight works in English as against some hundred works in French and German; and not one of these English works is of any completeness or distinction. To the average Englishman Calvin is a detestable theologian who taught that God created by far the vast majority of mankind for eternal damnation. Calvin is believed to be the worshipper and prophet of a deity unworthy of the adoration of the most ferocious savages. Of the true Calvin the average Englishman knows almost nothing, and he would be at a loss to account for the marvellous influence that Calvin exercised on the thought and destiny of Europe. Mr. John Buchan calls him 'the most potent intellectual force in the world between St. Thomas Aquinas and Voltaire.'[1] Let this appreciation by a modern writer, Dr. Fairbairn, who cannot be suspected of narrow prejudice, be added: 'His [Calvin's] services to the cause of sacred learning must not be forgotten.

[1] Buchan's *Montrose*, p. 52.

These it is hardly possible to exaggerate; he is the sanest of commentators, the most skilled of exegetes, the most reasonable of critics.' (This, by the way, was Dr. Pusey's opinion also.) 'He knows how to use an age to interpret a man, a man to interpret an age. His exegesis is never forced or fantastic; he is less rash and subjective in his judgments than Luther; more reverent to Scripture, more faithful to history, more modern in spirit. His work on the Psalms has much to make our most advanced scholars ashamed of the small progress we have made either in method or in conclusions. And his work is inspired by a noble belief; he thought that the one way to know Christianity was to know the mind of Christ; that this mind was expressed in the Scriptures; and to make them living and credible was to make indefinitely more possible its incorporation in the thoughts and institutions of men. It is by his service to this cause that Calvin must ultimately be judged.'

To Calvin's influence in the Elizabethan age evidence is given, even by his severest critics. Richard Hooker says of him: 'I think him the wisest man that ever the French Church did enjoy, since the hour it enjoyed him.' And again: 'Two things there are which have deservedly procured him honour throughout the world: the one his exceeding pains in composing the Institutions of Christian Religion; the other, his no less industrious travail for exposition of the Holy Scripture according to the same Institutions. . . . Of what account the Master of Sentences was to the Church of Rome, the same and more amongst the preachers of reformed Churches Calvin had purchased.'[1] Even more convincing as proof of

[1] Hooker, Preface to Keble's edition of *Ecclesiastical Polity*, ii. 8.

his influence on the rank and file of English laity is the will of Sir Henry Wotton: 'My soul I bequeath to the immortal God my Maker, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, my blessed Redeemer and Mediator, through His all-sole sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, *and efficient for His elect* [1] *in the number of whom I am by His mere grace*, and thereof comfortably assured by His Holy Spirit, the true eternal Comforter.' [1] When the Pope excommunicated Elizabeth he excommunicated her as a partaker 'in the heresy of Calvin.'

Calvin's special services to the Church at large may be summed up in his doctrine of man and his doctrine of the Church.

Calvin's doctrine of man, derived especially from the Epistle to the Romans, was the doctine of the universal corruption of man as a consequence of the Fall, a corruption so great and so complete as to make the whole work of man's salvation dependent from first to last on the free grace of God. 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy.' [2]

The effect of this doctrine was to raze to the ground the whole fabric of ranks, titles, honours, and time-long gradations of society. If Calvin was right, all men were equal in the one aspect which gives any value to life, the aspect of eternity. The King might be one of the lost, the poorest beggar one of the saved. The only true nobility was that which God by His free grace conferred. If it were objected that this system reduced salvation to the mere action of Divine favouritism, and left no room for the agency

[1] Izaak Walton's *Lives* (Oxford, 1824), p. 105.
[2] Romans ix. 16.

of free-will, it was not difficult to point out that the exercise of free-will depended largely on conditions of birth and fortune. Was there not as much favouritism here as in the doctrine of grace? Was it not better to depend on the free grace of God than on the complex conditions which combine to determine what man calls his free-will?

In any case the child of God—as Calvin saw him—had nothing to fear from human tyranny, no favours to beg from human partiality. Whether he were the most lonely shepherd on a far-off hillside, or an attendant on the court of a fickle sovereign, whether he stood on the battle-field, trafficked on the mart, was chained to the oar as a galley slave, was stretched on the rack, or scorched by the flames around the stake, he had nothing to fear: he had a possession which none could take from him, even himself. He was dependent on no priest, needed not the splendour of any sanctuary to assist his devotions, asked no aid of Virgin or Saint to assist him in his prayers. What he did need was the Word of God—not as a record of Jewish antiquities, nor even as a history of Divine revelations—but as a living Word that found him, awakened his conscience, rebuked his sins, assured him of his Father's love, filled him with joy and peace in believing—not a bare, dead word, but a living and active Word, 'sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart'—in fact, the Word ministered by the Spirit, and therefore full of the power of God. Is it strange that, so taught, Calvin and his followers made their doctrine of the Church rest upon the Scripture?

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH OF GOD

The seat of authority. Richard Hooker.

'THE Church of God,' 'the bride of Christ,' 'the body of Christ,' Calvin could not identify with any existing human institution. All Scripture taught him, so he believed, to identify this Universal Church with the whole body of God's elect throughout the whole world and throughout all ages of time. Local Churches he found in the New Testament, and found there also the necessity that these local Churches should possess the same qualities as the Universal Church, although in fact they included many wolves as well as sheep. But the ideal before them was (*a*) to conform themselves in character to the Universal Church, and (*b*) to make themselves institutions not only for the worship of God, but also for training men fit to worship Him. Now the manifest guide, the only safe guide for making Churches what they ought to be, was for him the New Testament, and on the New Testament he founded his Church discipline. In doing so he went further than even Luther or Zwingli: 'With Calvin Scripture alone had certainty. Neither traditions, nor observances, however authorised by custom, were spared; unless they could stand the proof, they fell beneath the sword of God's Word.' The result was that in the constitution and

government of the Church three, and only three, permanent officers were recognised : (1) the ministers of the Word, called indiscriminately bishops, pastors, or presbyters ; (2) seniors or elders elected from the laity to unite with the ministers in exercising discipline; (3) deacons to whom was entrusted the care of the poor. No one was legitimately called to the office of minister unless he was elected and approved by the congregation.

This system was framed to secure a Church and people who should be genuinely God-fearing and moral. A confession of faith was drawn up that the people might have clear ideas concerning God and His Word. Catechisms trained children and adults. Worship and singing were regulated. The Lord's Supper was fenced from profanation by excluding the ungodly. No dignity of rank, no wealth nor influence could protect the notorious evil-liver from excommunication.

The influence of Calvin on the English Reformation began with a correspondence between him and Cranmer—Calvin was a wonderful correspondent. It was fortified during the reign of Queen Mary by the intercourse that English fugitives from her persecution held with the foreign Churches. The worship and discipline of Geneva proved to be powerfully attractive to many of the exiles. At the head of these was John Knox, who had barely escaped being made Bishop of Rochester in the reign of Edward VI. The story of John Knox and of his indirect influence on the fortunes of the Elizabethan Settlement must be read in the powerful chapter written by Professor Maitland in the ' Cambridge Modern History.' Maitland

does not hesitate to call him 'Elizabeth's best friend.' 'God keep us,' exclaimed Elizabeth's Archbishop Parker, 'from such visitations as John Knox hath attempted in Scotland, the people to be orderers of things'; but, adds Professor Maitland, 'if in the autumn of 1559 the people of Scotland had not ordered things in a summary way, Dr. Parker's tenure of the Archbishopric might have been precarious.' Sudden as had been the conversion of Scotland, it was permanent. Beneath all that was fortuitous and all that was despicable was a moral revolt. 'It is almost miraculous,' wrote Randolph in the June of 1564, 'to see how the Word of God takes place in Scotland. They are better willing to receive discipline than any country that ever I was in. . . . Upon Sunday before noon and after noon there were at the sermons that confessed their offenses and repented themselves before the congregation. Cecil and Dr. Wotton were present. They think to see next Sunday Lady Stonehouse, by whom the Archbishop of St. Andrews has had without shame five or six children, openly repent herself.' When the captiousness and over-scrupulousness of the Puritans (so Calvin's followers in the Church of England were called) are emphasised, it must be remembered that behind these scruples there must have been some powerful moral attraction. A severe critic of the Puritans, George Cranmer, great-nephew of the martyr Archbishop, strenuously denounces the 'discipline' to his friend Richard Hooker. But he is obliged to admit that at first 'the greater part of the learned in the land were either eagerly affected, or favourably inclined that way. The books written for the most part savoured of disciplinary style: it

sounded everywhere in pulpits, and in the common phrase of men's speech.' [1]

Perhaps the most signal of the triumphs of this reaction against the Elizabethan Settlement is to be found in the records of Convocation. The Convocation of 1559 had been intensely Papal. In the Convocation of 1563 resolutions were rejected by the smallest majority which would have left the posture of the communicants to the discretion of the Bishops, would have abolished the observance of Saints' Days, the sign of the Cross in Baptism, and the use of organs. Yet there is no record of any great expulsion of recalcitrant clergy. Only 200 refused the Oath of Supremacy. Puritanism was a power that threatened to permeate and reconstruct the Church of England in the early days of Queen Elizabeth.

The Puritans sought the reformation of the English Church by constitutional means—that is, through Parliament. They were not separatists. They were content to remain within the Church until the nation, convinced by their arguments, should set up the form of Church government which they believed to be scriptural—that is, a Church framed on the Genevan model. But it is only right to add that, in practice, they gave effect to their scruples, though the law was not yet changed. They had friends and supporters among the aristocracy and merchants. Leicester and Walsingham were on their side. So were some of the great sailors. Among those who loved to harry the Spanish ships were not a few Puritans. For this reason, and because of their intimacy with the foreign Reformers whom Elizabeth supported, the Queen at

[1] Walton's *Lives*, p. 187.

times connived at their irregularities. But she herself would not endure Parliamentary interference with the Church, nor did she fail to recognise the democratic element at the root of their doctrines. A Church which would not hesitate to excommunicate sovereigns was not to her taste. After Grindal, who had been lenient to the Puritans, the Queen appointed first Whitgift and then Bancroft as Archbishops, both resolute opponents of Puritanism. By this agency, and by the rigours of the High Commission Court and of the Star Chamber, she restrained their activity. Her great object, and especially in the later part of her reign, was to secure unity of the Church in the interests of national unity. She was not hampered in this aim, as the later Stuarts were, by a desire to secure toleration for Roman Catholics. Her policy was in the direction of a servile Church discouraging all troublesome enthusiasms.

From the disastrous results of this tendency England was saved, partly by the work of Richard Hooker, 'an obscure harmless man,' so his admirer Izaak Walton describes him—'a man in poor clothes, his loins usually girt in a coarse gown or canonical coat: of a mean stature and stooping, and yet more lowly in the thoughts of his soul: his body worn out not with age, but with study and holy mortifications; his face full of pimples begot by his unactivity and sedentary life . . . of so mild and humble a nature that his poor parish clerk and he did never talk but both with their hats on, or both off.'[1] Yet was this obscure man a prince among controversialists, not only for his learning, or for his mastery of the English tongue,

[1] Walton's *Lives*, p. 168.

in which he was the first prose writer of great distinction, but because he placed charity in the forefront of a controversialist's armour. Whereas other opponents of Calvinism usually fastened on its predestinarian teaching as its weakest point, Hooker met it on the ground on which it believed itself to be most secure, the authority which it assigned to the Word of God. To tell the full tale of the great argument by which Hooker controverted the position that the constitution and government of a Church must of necessity have express warrant in the Word of God, is impossible here. The general argument is that Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation, but in matters not necessary to salvation we are left to the guidance of reason, yet not to the guidance of each man's own faulty and unenlightened reason, but to the exercise of that divine power which God has given for our direction in human affairs. With splendid courage Hooker defends the Book of Common Prayer against the criticisms of the Puritans, and defines the teaching of the Church of England therein contained so as to establish our Church against the assaults of Geneva and of Rome. In short, for the time being he silenced his adversaries, though he can hardly have satisfied them that the government of the Church, as they knew it, by Bishops, Archdeacons, and Consistory Courts, was altogether defensible by laws of reason. He certainly did not prove that such government was necessarily better for a national Church than the Genevan government adopted by the Church of Scotland.

It is pointed out by Hallam in his Literary History,[1]

[1] Vol. ii. p. 48 (Murray, 1854).

but denied by John Keble, that the principles of Hooker led on to conclusions which he never intended. 'We find,' says Hallam, 'that the popular origin of government, and the necessity of popular consent to its due exercise, are laid down by Hooker in the first and eighth Books of the "Ecclesiastical Polity" with a boldness not very usual in Elizabeth's reign, and it must be owned with a latitude of expression which leads us forward to the most unalloyed democracy. This theory of Hooker, which he endeavoured in some places to qualify, with little success or constancy, though it excited, perhaps, at the time, not much attention, became the basis of Locke's more celebrated essay on Government, and through other stages, of the political creed which actuates at present, as a possessing spirit, the great mass of the civilised world.'

This strange irony of fate which made the champion of Elizabeth's State Church the champion, unconsciously, of political democracy, needs further examination.

For this purpose we need not to examine minutely the attitude of Hooker to the *necessity* of Episcopacy and its relation to his general argument on the supremacy of law. John Keble in his Preface to Hooker has made the best case that can be made for supposing that Hooker inclined to believe in such necessity. But Keble himself admits that Hooker did not go so far as, for instance, Bancroft, whose sermon[1] on trying the spirits was to the school of Laud what Keble's sermon on Apostasy was to the school of Newman. Hooker maintained with precise emphasis

[1] Preached February 1588–89.

that 'whereas the rule of faith, as Tertullian saith, is but one, and that alone immovable and impossible to be framed or cast anew, the law of outward order and polity is not so.'[1] Now there was nothing to confine this principle to ecclesiastical order. If the King was not for all time the Lord's anointed, if the execution of Mary Queen of Scots was not a sin calling to Heaven for vengeance, but a political necessity, the time might come—it did not seem to be far off in Scotland—when the nation might 'speak in the gate' with unfaithful monarchs.

Great and memorable as were the services of Hooker as a controversialist in defence of his Church, hardly less was the service of his example as a parish priest. If we may judge by Shakespeare's attitude to 'parsons,' the standard of clerical piety and devotion was distinctly low. The Puritans, both in preaching and practice, were far in advance of their clerical brethren. Public opinion demands and expects consistency and purity of life from the ministers of God. It was no small gain to the Church that her foremost advocate was an exemplary parish priest, a diligent preacher, a friend of the needy, an advocate of peace and goodwill, an opponent of lawsuits, a careful visitor and catechiser of families, a living proof that the State Church was not barren of saints, and that her system devoutly practised could beget and advance holiness of life. It was to men like Hooker that the Church of the seventeenth century owed that deep loyalty and affection that was the mainstay of all that was best in the Royalist party and that she was recognised as the friend not only of the rich but of the poor. Izaak

[1] *Eccl. Polity*, bk. iii. chap. x. 7.

Walton tells a touching story of Hooker's parish clerk, how he lived on to the days of the Commonwealth, and being told to fetch stools for communicants to sit round the Holy Table, gave up his keys, saying: '"Pray take the keys and lock me out: I will never come more into this church; for all men will say, my master Hooker was a good man and a good scholar; and I am sure it was not used to be so in his days"; and so he went home, took to his bed and died within a few days after.'[1]

If the Church of England had altogether lacked clergy of the type of Richard Hooker she could never have weathered the storms that were awaiting her.

[1] Walton's *Lives*, p. 169.

CHAPTER III

FRIENDS AND FOES

The Fantastic Poets. The Roman propaganda.
The rise of the Independents.

RICHARD HOOKER, as John Keble reminds us, by study of Christian antiquity had passed into the spirit of the Fathers, who seemed to themselves to be living in a new heaven and a new earth. 'Thus in a manner they seem to have realised, though in an infinitely higher sense, the system of Plato: everything to them existed in two worlds: in the world of sense according to the outward manner and associations: in the world intellectual according to the spiritual associations. And thus did the whole scheme of material things, and especially those objects in it which are consecrated by scriptural allusions, assume in their eyes a sacramental or symbolical character.'[1]

Of Hooker's philosophy, piety, pastoral zeal, and exemplary life George Herbert was the heir and the great exponent in verse. The seriousness of the Puritans, their profound consciousness that religion was the supreme interest of man, are reflected in his 'Country Parson.' Before passing to speak of his verse, may we digress after Izaak Walton's fashion to tell the tale of his induction into the benefice of Bemerton? It is a story which exemplifies both the weakness and the strength of the State Church, its

[1] Keble's Preface to *Hooker's Works*, [49].

too close affinities with the Court on the one hand, and, on the other, the decision with which its noblest sons cast away the pomps and vanities of the world.

George Herbert then, of noble family and recently married, received through his kinsman the Earl of Pembroke the presentation of the benefice of Bemerton, which was in the King's gift. Herbert, though he had put on a 'resolution for the clergy,' fasted and prayed for a month before undertaking so great a responsibility. He then went to Salisbury, where the Court was, and told the Earl why he hesitated to accept the living. The Earl spoke of the matter to Laud, then Bishop of London, who was in attendance on the Court. 'The Bishop did the next day so convince Mr. Herbert that the refusal was a sin, that a tailor was sent for to come speedily to take measures, and make him canonical clothes against the next day; which the tailor did: and Mr. Herbert, being so habited, went with his presentation . . . to the Bishop of Salisbury, and he gave him institution immediately (for Mr. Herbert had been deacon some years before) and he was the same day inducted into the living,'[1] and afterwards ordained priest. If these things were done in the green tree, what was done in the dry? If the sincerely pious and devout George Herbert after a diaconate of many years, apparently without any curacy and living a layman's life, was thus speedily made a parish priest, what of the worldly hangers-on at Court, whose transformation into beneficed parsons was almost as much an affair of the tailor as of the Bishop?[2]

[1] Walton's *Lives*, p. 227.

[2] See note, p. 27.

But to return from this digression. Hooker had taught and by his life had shown that there was, behind the bare Parliamentary authority for religion, an authority neither Papal nor Scriptural, the authority of the Divine law of reason, the enemy at once of superstition and of excessive scrupulousness. Into this heritage George Herbert entered, and his brethren the Fantastic Poets. This world they claimed for the Church of England. 'One of the chief objects of their poetry was to justify the instinct which made them poets, to show that their love for beautiful things was not inconsistent with a concern for righteousness as deep as that of the Puritans, though more kindly. In all their work there is an implied protest against the idea of the vileness of man and the perpetual anger of God. Herbert and Vaughan in particular are devout humanists who would prove that man is not too base to be friends with God. . . . Poetry, they are eager to prove, comes not from Parnassus but from Heaven; and they try to make it a kind of link between Heaven and earth. They are always tracing connexions between celestial and earthly things . . . In their restless eagerness to analyse everything it was natural to them to think of everything in terms of something else. . . . In his "Church Porch" Herbert preaches a wisdom half religious, half worldly, which is intended to smooth the way from the world to the Church. . . . Herbert lived in an age which was critical of itself and of the Universe . . . in which one kind of philosophy of life expressed itself as Calvinism, another as Romanism, and yet another as Anglo-Catholicism. Herbert was an Anglican, trying to find a middle way of orderly freedom and sweetness

and light between what seemed to him to be two dark contending spiritual despotisms. He wished himself and all other men to be in immediate communion with God; and he also laboured to prove that God was loving and kindly, and that a high and reasonable joy must be the noblest result of communion with Him.' [1]

This estimate of Herbert by Mr. Clutton Brock in the 'Cambridge Modern History' may be thus summed up in Herbert's own words:

'She on the hills, which wantonly
Allureth all in hope to be
By her preferr'd,
Hath kiss'd so long her painted shrines,
That ev'n her face by kissing shines,
For her reward.
She in the valley is so shie
Of dressing, that her hair doth lie
About her eares;
While she avoids her neighbour's pride,
She wholly goes on th' other side,
And nothing wears.
But, dearest Mother, what those misse,
The meane thy praise and glorie is,
And long may be.
Blessèd be God, Whose love it was
To double-moat thee with His grace,
And none but thee.' [2]

From the Church of England and her defenders we must turn back to her opponents. It is incorrect, as we have seen, to reckon among these the Puritans. The Puritans were not opposed to the existence of a

[1] *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iv. p. 776 ff.
[2] *The British Church.*

State Church. They would have reformed it if they could, and would have reformed it through Parliament. In their eyes it had taken over too much of Roman superstition, and was not sufficiently secure against a Roman reaction. For this view there was abundant justification in the political situation. At Elizabeth's accession the Roman Catholics were a majority of the nation. In Mary Queen of Scots they had a natural leader with a better title to the throne in their eyes than had the daughter of Anne Boleyn. When Mary fled to England the Earls of Westmoreland and Northumberland rose in her favour in 1569, occupied Durham, burned the Prayer Book, and had Mass sung in the Cathedral. In 1570 the Pope excommunicated Elizabeth, thereby justifying any attempt to dethrone her. The newly formed Order of Jesuits did not scruple to murder heretical sovereigns. Elizabeth's life was in constant peril, both before and after the execution of Queen Mary.

More formidable even than the plots of assassination and rebellion was the steady propaganda of the Jesuits, whom no executions could deter, nor laws exclude from the country. How formidable were their efforts may be judged from the bitterness of Richard Hooker in his two sermons on the Epistle of St. Jude.[1] It is hardly from his lips that we should have expected such words as these spoken of Jesuits and Papists: 'If I should follow the comparison, and here uncover the cup of those deadly and ugly abominations, wherewith this Jeroboam of whom we speak, hath made the earth so drunk that it reeled

[1] Keble doubts whether these sermons, though assigned to Hooker, were really his.

under us, I know your godly hearts would loath to see them. For my own part I delight not to rake in such filth, I had rather take a garment upon my shoulders, and go with my face from them to cover them. The Lord open their eyes and cause them to see how they are wretched and poor and blind and naked.' The missionaries from Douai were at work in country parishes, as Richard Montagu testifies in his 'New Gagg for an old Goose': 'falling in with some, one at least, of the weaker and subordinate sexe; endeavouring to make proselytes of our neighbours' wives . . . with great outcries of Damned Heretickes, out of the Church, no service: no Sacrament: no Ministry: no Faith in Christ: no salvation.'[1] They were busy in the Universities. Thomas Traherne writes:[2] 'One evening as I came out of the Bodleian Library, which is the glory of Oxford and this nation, at the stairs foot I was saluted by a person that had deserved well of learning, who, being an intimate friend of mine, told me there was a gentleman, his cousin, pointing to a grave person in the quadrangle, a man that had spent many thousands in promoting Popery, and that he had a desire to speak with me. The gentleman came up to us of his own accord; we agreed for the greater liberty and privacy, to walk into the new Parks. He was a notable man, of an eloquent tongue, and competent reading, bold, forward, talkative enough; he told me that the Church of Rome had eleven millions of martyrs, seventeen oecumenical Councils, above one

[1] R. Montagu's *New Gagg for an old Goose:* 'To the Reader,' 2nd page.

[2] *Poetical Works of T. Traherne*, p. xxxvi.

hundred Provincial Councils, all the Doctors, all the Fathers, Unity, Antiquity, Consent, etc.' When Traherne offered to confront him next morning in the Library with evidence of Roman forgeries, 'What is that to the Church of Rome?' cried he. Whereupon Traherne had done with him as an obstinate person. All objects of this propaganda came not off as unscathed as Traherne. Among notable victims were Crashaw and afterwards Dryden. Perhaps the most mischievous in the end of all their triumphs was Christopher Davenport, author of the 'Paraphrastica Expositio Articulorum,' the audacious attempt to prove that the Thirty-nine Articles did not condemn the teaching of the Council of Trent. Laud, to his credit, refused permission to print the book in England. Some two centuries were to elapse before it reappeared in the form of 'Tract 90,' and again in our own day to do duty at the Malines Conversations. There is much that is intensely modern in the story of this attack on the Church of England. But there is also this great difference, that it was recognised as an attack, and was not treated as the holding out of an olive branch.

For the Roman propaganda the goal of success was the subjection of the State to the rule of the clergy and to their sovereign the Pope. The worship of the Church of England, and inferentially to some extent her doctrine, had been determined by the English Government in defiance of the will of the clergy. Resistance to this settlement was a crime, which might in extreme cases amount to treason. It was not only Roman Catholic priests who were executed. In 1593 three Sectaries were convicted of seditious

libel and executed. Fines, imprisonment, and exile were the lot of many others. But still the Puritan leaders clung to the hope that they would by constitutional means abolish Episcopacy and substitute for it some form of Genevan discipline—that they would do in England what they saw accomplished in Scotland. In other words, their ideal was a national Church ruled by the faithful clergy and laity, and supported by the civil authority. The conception of separation between civil and ecclesiastical government, with the inevitable corollary of religious toleration, was yet to find its birth.

The first exponent of this new doctrine was Robert Browne, the son of a Rutlandshire squire, who was being educated at Corpus Christi, Cambridge, at that time 'a fast college,' with a view to his succeeding to the family living of Little Casterton. At Cambridge Browne came under the influence of Cartwright, and, whether from reaction against his surroundings, or from natural impatience of youth, grew tired of the attempt to reform the Church through Parliament. The Church of England as he saw it was an impure Church. To accept its Orders, or to be in any way indebted to it, was a sin. He lost or destroyed letters dimissory from Archbishop Grindal for his ordination. What need was there for ordination? Were not all believers prophets, priests, and kings? Their first duty was to come out of the impure Church, and to form themselves into a company 'which by willing covenant made with God and His Christ should keep His laws in one holy communion.' He would have no assistance from civil authorities. 'The Lord's people is of the willing sort.' 'To

compel religion, to plant Churches by laws and penalties, belongeth not magistrates.' 'The outward powers and civil forcings let us leave to magistrates, but let the Church rule in spiritual wise, and not in world-like manner.'

Robert Browne did not succeed in establishing a Church, for his attempts in that direction, first at Norwich and then at Middelburg, failed. In Scotland he was equally unsuccessful. Finally crushed by some months' imprisonment, he recanted, and became Rector of Little Casterton, from which he passed on to a living in Northamptonshire.[1]

Browne's principles proved to be more enduring than his own adherence to them. They were no private possession, but the expression of a spirit that was to set its mark permanently on English history. On the one hand there grew up the conviction that the Church of England was not merely defective in its reformation, but 'well-nigh altogether idolatrous, superstitious and Popish' in its services, and 'dissonant from Christ's institution and derived from Antichrist' in its hierarchy. For the promulgation of such teachings there was no room, even under Queen Elizabeth. Their propagators, Burrow, Greenwood, and Penry (known as Martin Marprelate), were sentenced to death; others expatriated themselves, and formed congregations at Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, and Leyden. From Leyden originated the expedition of the *Mayflower*, joined by emigrants from England.

[1] Browne was Rector of Little Casterton June 30–September 2, 1591. On September 2 he was instituted Rector of Achurch, and ordained deacon and priest on September 30, 1591, thereby going far beyond George Herbert in ecclesiastical irregularity.

'Religion stands on tip-toe in our land,
Readie to pass to the American strand'

—so sings George Herbert in his very gloomy lines on the Church Militant. But this exodus was very far from being complete. The principles of the Independents obtained firm hold, especially in the Eastern Counties. Among their adherents were some of the greatest minds in the England of that day. Baillie, in his 'Defensive of Independency,' writes: 'Of all the byepaths wherein the wanderers of our times are pleased to walk, this is the most considerable, not for numbers, but for the quality of the erring persons. There be few of the noted sects which are not more numerous, but this way, what it wants by numbers, supplies by the weight of its followers. After five years' endeavours and great industry, within the lines of the city's communications they are said, as yet, to consist of much within one thousand persons, men, women, and all, who to this day have put themselves in communication with any known congregation of that way being reckoned. But, setting aside their number, for other respects they are of so eminent a condition, that not any, nor all of the rest of the sects are comparable with them.'

When it is suggested, as it often is suggested, that the Independents were fanatical idealists, not content to deal with the compromises on which sane politics must be built up, it should be remembered that a large section of the most eminent minds in England of the seventeenth century were Independents, hard-headed, downright, consistent men, intolerant of shams, and determined that no earthly power should come between them and the God whom they feared.

CHAPTER IV

'WHIPS OR SCORPIONS?'

The Stuart Kings. The Divine Right of Monarchy and Episcopacy. Presbyterians and Independents.

HOOKER, in one of his sermons on St. Jude,[1] was tempted by a quotation from the Book of Chronicles to compare the Church of Rome to Jeroboam, and to call the Church of England 'Roboam.' He did not live to see that Jewish history repeat itself in the passage from the days of Elizabeth to the days of the Stuarts. James was in haste to get rid of the late Queen's advisers. Indeed, seventeenth-century history, not in England only, passes from great sovereigns with great ministers to incompetent sovereigns aided by favourites. 'Dropping the Pilot' was not an invention of the ex-Kaiser. So, when James was presented with a Puritan petition[2] to relax the severity of Elizabeth's laws, Rehoboam-like he answered: 'I detest their courses who peremptorily disallow of all things which have been disabused in Popery; and know not how to answer the objections of the Papists, when they charge us with novelties, but by telling them, we retain the primitive use of things, and only forsake their novel corruptions. . . . If this be all your party have to say, I will make them conform themselves, or I will harry them out of the Kingdom.'[3]

[1] See p. 23. [2] The so-called Millenary Petition; see Appendix II.
[3] Fuller's *Church History of Britain*, pp. 187–9.

If the King could have forborne his threats, he would have placed himself in line with the reaction against Puritans, which found in Hooker's teaching, and in the piety of which he was the model, a religion which was profound and sincere, and desirous of restoring some lost ceremonial, while heartily opposed to Popery. But James was a religious pedant, not a religious man. He was Bunyan's Mr. Talkative. He did not fathom the depth of the religious force that he was antagonising. His hope, and that of Charles I, was to use the power of England to re-establish Episcopacy in Scotland, and for that purpose to form a strong alliance between the Divine Right of bishops and the Divine Right of kings. Whether James and his son would have succeeded had they left Scotland alone is uncertain. But the effect of their policy was to draw English Protestantism into union with Scottish, and thereby eventually to light the fires of civil war that involved for a while Monarchy and Episcopacy in a common ruin.

It is no purpose of ours to do so much as outline the history of this conflict. Our concern is with the principles involved and their relation to the world of John Bunyan, who was born in the reign of Charles I and in the year when Parliament presented the Petition of Right, and who died in the year when James II fled the kingdom. Bunyan was born just after the suspension of Archbishop Abbot, the friend of the Puritans, and their last friend at Lambeth ; and he died on the eve of the Nonjuring Schism. He was only eighteen years old when Laud was executed, and at that age still found delight in the stately service of the Church. Yet was the policy of Laud to affect his

attitude to the Church of his birth. For Laud, High Churchman though he was in doctrine, was forced to rely on the civil power in the execution of his scheme of forcibly turning all Englishmen into loyal and obedient sons of the Church that laid increasing stress on external ceremonial.

Of Laud's activity before he became Archbishop we have, it is commonly believed, an evidence in the Preface to the Thirty-nine Articles.[1] The Articles are of special interest to us because, unlike the Elizabethan Prayer Book, they may claim at least the approval of Convocation—that is, of the Convocation of 1563, which came so near to conceding several of the earnest desires of the Puritans.[2] They were framed—on so disputed a question it is best to use the words of an historian of acknowledged eminence—they were framed, according to Professor Maitland, with 'some desire to give no needless offence to Lutherans, and apparently the Queen suppressed till 1571 a phrase which would have repelled them, but even when this phrase was omitted, Beza would have approved the formula, and it would have given greater satisfaction at Geneva, than at Jena or Tubingen. . . . As to the "sacrifices of masses" there could be no doubt. The anathema of Trent was frankly encountered by "blasphemous fables."'[3] But it had come about that the anti-Puritan reaction and the desire to restore pre-Reformation ceremonial had raised controversies which have lasted to our times, controversies which the Caroline-Laudian Preface still extant in our Prayer Book was intended to quiet once for all. 'No one

[1] The date of this Preface is 1628, the year of Bunyan's birth.
[2] See p. 13.
[3] *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. ii. p. 588.

shall put his own sense or comment on the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense.' If he disobeyed, he was to be subjected to 'the Church's censure in our Commission Ecclesiastical.' 'And we will see that there be due execution on them.' So says King Charles I. In other words, the 'plain and grammatical sense' was to be that which the Crown through the Court of High Commission determined. The challenge was at once met by the House of Commons. To use the words of the late Bishop of Gloucester, which have an extraordinarily modern ring: 'The House of Commons turned itself for the time into a theological debating society and solemnly adopted the following resolution: "'We the Commons now in Parliament assembled do claim, profess, and avow for truth, the sense of the Articles of religion which were established in the reign of our late Queen Elizabeth, which by public acts of the Church of England and by the general consent of the writers of the Church have been delivered to us: and we do reject the sense of the Jesuits and the Arminians."'[1] In which contention the House of Commons was, beyond doubt, historically correct. But the net result was that even of the Articles which were approved by Convocation, the Crown on the one hand, and the House of Commons on the other, claimed to be interpreters. So emphatically in doctrine as well as ritual was asserted 'the supremacy of the State over the Church, which had been the greatest gain of the Reformation.'[2]

The King manifested his attitude to the Com-

[1] Gibson's *XXXIX Articles*, p. 51.
[2] Fletcher, *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 386.

mons' interference in Church affairs by releasing Mainwaring from a fine imposed on him by the House of Commons, by promoting Montagu, who had licensed Mainwaring, to be Archbishop of York, and by making Laud, who had written the Preface to the Articles, Bishop of London. These favours defiantly showered on the opponents of the House of Commons had disastrous consequences. The will of the House of Commons is not wisely flouted.

Behind Laud's Visitation Articles the same supremacy manifests itself. Laud desired to carry out in the Church Strafford's State policy of 'thorough.' Ecclesiastical irregularities were 'to be made to cease.' He had, 'alas'! no power in the Province of York, but the whole Province of Canterbury was to be reduced to order. Laud attempted no united voice of the Episcopate. For the time being he superseded all the bishops. Was it in jest or in earnest that the Pope offered him a cardinal's hat?

Examination of the Articles of Enquiry reveals considerable and widespread irregularity: hats placed on the Communion Table, hats worn in church, talking and jesting during service, no Cross in Baptism, no ring in marriage, no surplice, sometimes not even a preacher's gown: Popish recusants,[1] Puritanic recusants, very infrequent Communions. All these and many other offences were hunted down, to be punished, if need be, in the Court of High Commission. Probably that which gave most offence was the removal of the Communion Table to the east end of the chancel, and the insistence on reception of the Sacrament by communicants kneeling there. In proportion

[1] Recusant, one who refuses to conform to the Church.

to the seriousness of the communicant would be the disturbance of his devotions by these new rules about the manner of communion. If he 'scrupled' kneeling at the Table, how much more would he scruple kneeling at the Altar! Not much less offensive to many would be enforcement of bowing 'towards the Altar.' But when all the visitation was completed, then came the State on the scene, in the shape of the Crown. The result was reported to Charles, whose comments and criticisms are still extant. Charles, inspired by his Queen, hoped perhaps to manufacture out of Strafford and Laud combined an English Richelieu. That he was defeated was largely due to the fact that Puritanism was widely dispersed throughout England and not confined, as in France, to isolated Huguenot districts, but pervading all classes, nobility, squirearchy, and the legal profession, permeating whole towns and counties. England in the seventeenth century was an amazingly religious country.

The assertion of the Royal Prerogative was not confined to matters ecclesiastical. In 1635 Ship-money was demanded from the whole nation without any authority of Parliament. The judges supported the Crown. The property of the subject was at the mercy of the King. Then came the rebellion of the Scots against Laud's Prayer Book and his attempt to restore prelatical Episcopacy in place of the still surviving shadowy Episcopacy, and to recover episcopal property from the laity into whose possession it had passed. Charles assumed the whole responsibility for Laud's action, and was faced with rebellion in Scotland. That rebellion forced the King in 1640 to summon the

Long Parliament. One of the first acts of the House of Commons was to pass in May 1641 what was practically an English Covenant. It combined defence of Protestantism with defence of liberty. Those who signed it pledged themselves to defend 'with life, power and estate the true Reformed Protestant religion, the King's person, honour, and estate, and the lawful rights and liberties of the subject.' The words Protestant Reformed Religion survive in the King's coronation oath to-day. Considering the earnestness of Laud and his friends to assert their Protestantism, we can hardly believe that the addition of the word 'Reformed' did not point to the Puritan, as opposed to the Laudian, conception of Protestantism, the Protestantism that antagonised the newly enforced ceremonial. This interpretation is surely placed beyond doubt by the final form of the Remonstrance in November, which demanded 'removal of oppressions in religion, Church government and discipline, and prohibition of unnecessary ceremonies by which divers consciences have been scrupled.' In this form the Remonstrance was carried by a narrow majority (159 to 148), and with evident signs of division in the House that had carried Strafford's attainder by 204 to 59. Some of the Puritans had begun to fear the lengths to which opposition to the Crown was carried.

The result of this division in the Puritan party was to make the opponents of the King more dependent upon the Scots, who were to be satisfied with nothing short of abolition of Episcopacy and introduction of the Genevan government of the Church by ministers, elders, and deacons, and assemblies of a really democratic character.

Many of the laity felt that concession of the Scottish demand was but leaping out of the frying-pan into the fire. They did not wish to commit themselves to the extreme forms of Calvinistic doctrine, nor to be ruled by ministers instead of bishops. Robert Browne's words convey this view forcibly: 'If their system were adopted, then instead of one Pope we should have a thousand, and of some Lord Bishops in name, a thousand lordly tyrants indeed, which now do disdain the name.' [1] The Westminster Assembly of Divines was summoned by the Long Parliament of 1643 for settlement of religion, but it was hardly a free ecclesiastical assembly. It suffered more than a little from political interference. The layman was not disposed to obey the priest writ large under the title of Presbyter.

For this and other reasons which lie outside the religious problem, the Parliamentary cause had but indifferent success on the field. The nation did not throw itself into the war. 'The total number of men under arms during the Civil War was never more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the population, as against the one-tenth of the population which the Boers put in the field' in the Boer War. By a strange irony of fate, whereas the two contending parties were at strife very largely about the form of the State Church, which was to be the one Church of the nation, and was to determine the faith and worship of the whole people, the settlement of the quarrel fell into the hands of the Independents, whose watchwords were (1) the independence of each separate congregation, (2) the non-interference of the civil power with

[1] Scott Pearson's *Thomas Cartwright*, p. 340.

religious belief. The Declaration of Faith and Order passed by the Savoy Conference of Congregational Churches in 1658 runs as follows: 'To each of these Churches Christ has given all power and authority which is in any way needful for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline which He has instituted for them to observe. Besides these particular Churches there is not instituted by Christ any Church more extensive or Catholic entrusted with power for the administration of His ordinances, and the executing of any authority in His Name.'

Similarly John Owen declares: 'I doubt not that the great controversy which God hath with this nation for so many years was upon this account, that contrary to the light of the glorious Gospel which shone among us, the wills and fancies of men, under the name of order, decency, and the authority of the Church (a chimaera that none knew what it was, nor in whom it rested), were imposed on men in the worship of God.'

Milton, who went even beyond the Independents, maintained that 'The ultimate arbiter of every question is the individual reason and conscience, than which God only is greater, and that the mind of each man is free to try all things and hold fast by his own conscience uncontrolled by State or Church.'

Cromwell, who could not afford to alienate the Scots, was obliged to make Presbyterianism the State profession of religion. His own convictions were for entire toleration, and he was so far enabled to put them in force that by the Instrument (1653): 'Such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ, though

differing in judgement from the doctrine, worship or discipline publicly held forth, shall not be restrained from, but protected in, the profession of their faith and exercise of their religion, so as they abuse not their liberty to the injury of others, and to the actual disturbance of public peace on their parts, provided this liberty be not extended to Popery or Prelacy or such as under a profession of Christ hold for, and practise, licentiousness.'

The result of his policy, according to Richard Baxter, to whom we must presently return, was that 'God did so wonderfully bless the labours of His *unanimous faithful ministers* that had it not been for the faction of prelatists on one side, and the factions of giddy, turbulent sectarians on the other side . . . England had been like, in a quarter of an age, to become a garden of saints, and a pattern of holiness to all the world, and the unmatchable paradise of the earth.'

On these points Baxter's evidence may be discounted in some quarters. Nor is it likely that there will ever be agreement as to Cromwell's true character, or pardon extended for some acts for which he was directly or indirectly responsible. But it is beyond dispute that whereas the Stuarts had made England contemptible in the eyes of Europe, Cromwell restored it to the position which it had held under the Tudors. Others shared the pride of Marvell when he sang of the Protector:

> 'What may not then our isle presume
> While victory his crest doth plume!
> What may not others fear,
> If thus he crowns each year?'

But Cromwell's England had renounced Elizabeth's Church. The State-controlled Church of Elizabeth had become under the Stuarts an ally and an instrument of oppression. Its tyranny was intolerable to a nation which, under the influence of the Renascence in literature, and intercourse with Holland in commerce, had learnt to prize its new-found liberty, and to dread the despotism under which France and Spain were groaning.

CHAPTER V

BUNYAN AND BAXTER

The Puritan between Bishops, Presbyterians, and Independents. Toleration at the cost of inclusion of Roman Catholics rejected.

By resemblances and differences Baxter and Bunyan interpret each other to us to-day. Baxter was the older man, being born in 1615, thirteen years before the birth of Bunyan. In their deaths they were not divided, both dying just before the flight of James II. There is no record that they ever met or knew each other, though Bunyan became a most popular preacher, attracting crowds on his visits to London. But Baxter was then a worn-out and almost dying man. Among those who went to hear Bunyan was the great Independent, John Owen, but not, so far as we know, Richard Baxter. Baxter was the son of a yeoman, whose grandfather had been disinherited for forsaking the old faith. He was well educated, mixed with gentry and nobility, even attended the Court for a time, was a preacher in Cromwell's army, and, if he had juggled with his conscience, could have ended his days as Bishop of Hereford. Bunyan was a tinker, a tinker's son, and never rose to be more than minister of a meeting-house. He could probably have held a church in Bedford during the Protectorate, had he been willing to take 'State hire.' Baxter was a deacon in Holy

Orders, and the immensely successful Vicar, for a while, of Kidderminster. His autobiography gives us a clear picture of the ecclesiastical conditions which contributed to Puritanism, and of the Puritan's attitude to the Church. He shall tell the tale in his own words :

'In the village where I was born (Renton in Shropshire) there were four readers successively in six years, ignorant men, and two of them immoral in their lives, who were all my schoolmasters. In the village where my father lived there was a reader [1] of about 80 years of age that had never preached, and had two churches about 20 miles distant. His eyesight failing him he read the Common Prayer without book, but in reading of the psalms and chapters he got a common thresher and day labourer one year, and a tailor another year, for the Clerk could not read well. . . . At the same time another neighbour's son, that had been a while at school, turned minister, one who must needs go further than the rest, and ventured to preach, and after got a living in Staffordshire, and, when he had been a preacher twelve or sixteen years, was fain to give over, it being discovered that his Orders were forged. . . . Within a few miles about us were a dozen more ministers that were 80 years old apiece, and never preached ; poor, ignorant readers, and most of them led immoral lives.' (Are we to attribute this plethora of dissolute octogenarians to Baxter's faulty memory, or to the climate of Shropshire ?) 'Only two or three competent preachers, and these (though conformable all save one) were the common marks of

[1] Probably in Deacon's Orders, licensed to read prayers and the Scriptures, but not to preach.

people's obloquy and reproach, and any that had gone to hear them, when he had no preaching at home, was made the derision of the vulgar rabble under the name of Puritan.' [1]

While at the Grammar School of Wroxeter, where Lord Newport and his brother were his schoolfellows, Baxter was 'awakened, after robbing an orchard, by reading Bunny's "Resolutions"' (written by Parsons the Jesuit, and revised by Bunny). From Wroxeter he went to the house of the chaplain of the Council of the West at Ludlow. This home was considered a better education than even the Universities. From Ludlow he went to Court under Sir H. Herbert, then Master of the Revels and a near kinsman of George Herbert. George Herbert had been dead some five years, but it is not impossible that Baxter, who says in one place, 'I feel myself much better in Herbert's "Temple,"' may have heard of Herbert's 'Parson of a Town,' may have read it, may have been inspired by it with ideals of pastoral life. But this is guess-work.

Baxter was ordained to teach in a school at Dudley, having never, till that time at all events, examined carefully the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-nine Articles. Then we read of the result of this examination: 'Kneeling I thought lawful, and all the mere circumstances determined by the Magistrate' (note the 'magistrate': Baxter does not say 'by the Church') 'which God in Nature or Scripture hath determined of only in general. The surplice I doubted of, but more inclined to think it lawful: and though I purposed, while I yet doubted, to forbear it till necessity lay upon me, yet I could not have justified

[1] The quotations from Baxter are from his autobiography.

the forsaking of my ministry first (though I never wore it to this day).[1] The ring in marriage I made no scruple about. The Cross in Baptism I thought Dr. Ames proved unlawful; and though I was not without some doubting on the point, because I must incline to judge it unlawful, never used it to this day. A form of prayer and liturgy I judged to be lawful, and in some cases lawfully imposed; our liturgy in particular I judged to have much disorder' (yet had Baxter carefully studied Hooker's 'Ecclesiastical Polity') 'and defectiveness in it, but nothing should make the use of it unlawful to them that have not liberty to do better. Discipline I wanted in the Church, and saw the sad effects of its neglect' (it evidently did not occur to Baxter that he needed any discipline over his surplice), 'but thought it had been the Bishops' personal neglect. Subscription' (*i.e.* to the Articles and Prayer Book) 'I began to judge unlawful and saw that I used temerity in what I did' (*i.e.* in signing for his Deacon's Orders). 'For though I could still use the Common Prayer, and was not yet against Diocesans, yet to subscribe *ex animo* that there was nothing in the three Books' (Prayer Book, Ordinal, and Articles) 'contrary to the Word of God was that, which, if it had to be done again, I durst not do. So that subscription, the Cross in baptism, and the promiscuous giving the Lord's Supper to drunkards, swearers, fornicators, scorners at godliness, etc., that are not excommunicate by a Bishop or Chancellor that is not of their acquaintance, these three were all that I now became Non-conformist to.'

It would be difficult to find a more moderate and

[1] Yet Baxter administered Holy Communion in Kidderminster.

temperate statement of the Puritan position. In judging it recollection must be had of its continuity from the settlement under Elizabeth. How far it had been stimulated into activity and intensity by the policy of Archbishops Bancroft and Laud is not easy to determine now. But it had a continuous history behind it from the first. We must also recollect that the idea of separation from the State Church was not so easily reconciled to the conscience as it is in our own day, and that the State in its own interest was reluctant under the Tudors to force the Puritans into the position of 'rebels.' That blunder, that crime, was left to the Stuarts as necessary to their autocracy —they and their admirers would say to 'efficiency'— in Church as well as State.

When the Civil War came, Baxter with reluctance became a preacher in Cromwell's army, which was well furnished, perhaps too well furnished, with chaplains. Oliver received him coldly, for 'Cromwell had by degrees headed the greater part of the Army with Anabaptists, Antinomians, Seekers and Separatists at best: and all these he tied together by the point of liberty of conscience, which was the common interest in which they did all unite.' Of the execution of Charles I Baxter says: 'Therein did appear the severity of God, the mortality and uncertainty of worldly things, and the fruit of a sinful nation's provocation, and the infamous effects of error, pride, and selfishness prepared by Satan to be charged hereafter upon reformation and godliness to the unspeakable injury of the Christian name and the Protestant cause, the rejoicing and advancing of the Papists; the hardening of thousands against the means of their

own salvation, and the confusion of the actors when their day is come.'

Upon the Restoration Baxter and his friends, Calamy and Reynolds, became persons of great importance. Charles II had made large promises of toleration, but he wished to extend it to Papists as well as Nonconformists. The Nonconformist leaders, it was hoped, would agree to these terms and would carry the bulk of their followers with them. But they had a vivid recollection of the part played by the Roman Catholics in the Civil War, and of Charles I's attempt to secure his position by aid from France and Ireland. They knew also what dangerous influence the Roman Catholics had acquired at Court. They absolutely refused to agree to any declaration of toleration which included the Papists. But could not they be bribed? 'A little before the meeting about the King's Declaration,' says Baxter, 'Colonel Birch came to me from the Lord Chancellor to persuade me to take the Bishopric of Hereford.' Baxter refused Hereford and Calamy Lichfield, but Reynolds accepted Norwich. Then followed the Act of Uniformity of 1662, of which the Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal, and Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity are a Schedule. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 was passed by a very narrow majority, 186 votes to 180. It required all clergy to declare upon oath their unfeigned assent and consent to the whole of the three books as agreeable to the Word of God, and required all clergy to have episcopal ordination. The King gave his consent to it on May 19. It was to take effect on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24. There was still in the mind of politicians a lingering hope that

Baxter and his friends might put off their decision till the fatal day, in which case many of the rank and file would probably have taken the oath for want of a decisive lead. But Baxter acted promptly. In vain did friends try to persuade him to put the most favourable construction on the oath, and to take it in the best possible sense. There is an intensely modern ring about the arguments as Baxter has recorded them:

'The best Conformists say, "Because no form is of Divine institution, I will declare that the Episcopal form is of Divine institution." They also say, "All sayings are to be interpreted in the best sense that the words will bear."' To which Baxter replies: 'In the best sense which hath evidence of truth, charity requireth us to take all the words of others. But the question is first, Which is the true sense, and not which is the best. And if it can be proved that another is either certainly or probably the true meaning of the words, we must not feign to a better sense, because it is better. . . . If I could take all oaths and statutes in the best sense which possibly those words may be used to express, I could take almost any oath in the world under pretence of obeying it, and Jesuitical equivocation would be but the common duty of the charitable. BUT CHARITY IS NOT BLIND, NOR WILL IT PROVE A FIT COVER FOR A LIE.'

It was under this persuasion that Baxter and a large number of ministers, some say 2000, gave up their benefices. Some were, no doubt, Presbyterians and Independents who had been intruded during the Commonwealth into livings from which clergy, found to be unfit by Cromwell's Triers, had been expelled.

Others were Puritans like Baxter, who had used the Common Prayer with misgivings. They could not find it in their consciences to swear unfeigned assent and consent to all that was in that wonderful Schedule to the Act of Uniformity. It did not make matters easier for them that the bishops had prepared the book, and the Convocations had approved it. They could not find it agreeable to the Word of God, nor swear that they believed it so to be. There was no longer room for them in the State Church of England.

This is not the place to enumerate the other intolerant Acts passed by this Parliament, the Corporation Act, the Conventicle Act, and the Five Mile Act.[1] Allowance may be made for the strong reaction against all and sundry who seemed to share the guilt of the Martyr King's death and the oppressions of Cromwell's army. *Vae victis!* is the lot of the defeated in civil wars—a necessity, if further outbreaks are to be prevented. But it was a calamity for the Church of England that a considerable spiritual force was eliminated from her parochial life, that her sacraments were degraded by being made tests of office, and that she found herself compelled to make the Divine Right of kings her favourite and most popular doctrine.

From all anxieties about Conformity or Nonconformity John Bunyan was saved, partly by his dislike of State hire, which had prevented him from intruding

[1] The Corporation Act required all who held office in a corporation to take the Sacrament; the Conventicle Act prohibited meetings for worship, except of the Church of England, by more than five persons; the Five Mile Act forbade residence of Nonconformist ministers within five miles of their former pastorate. These with the Act of Uniformity form the so-called Clarendon Code.

into a benefice, but even more by the fact that he was an Anabaptist. Traditions of turbulence and violence had clung to the name of this sect ever since the peasant revolts of the German Anabaptists in the sixteenth century. They were despised and disliked by Puritans, Presbyterians, and Independents as 'Sectaries,' who waited not for any legal authority to form their Churches, and found their ministers among the commonest of the people. Baxter's account of them is not without interest: 'There are two sorts of men called Anabaptists among us. The one sort are sober godly Christians, who, when they are baptized to satisfy their consciences, live among us in Christian love and peace, and I shall be ashamed if I love them not as heartily as any of them shall do either me, or better men than I, that differ from them. The other sort hold it unlawful to hold communion with such as are not of their own mind and way, and are schismatically troublesome and unquiet in labouring to increase their party. These are they that offend me and other lovers of peace.' It is doubtful into which of these two classes Baxter would have relegated John Bunyan. But the magistrates of Bedfordshire made no fine distinctions. Anabaptists were classed with regicides, and they must be suppressed without delay. As early as 1660 John Bunyan found his way into prison, and there we may for the present leave him.

It only remains to be pointed out that, at the Restoration, Parliament definitely settled the lines of the Church of England in a fashion that was displeasing to the King. Whether he would have preferred, as some believe, a comprehensive Church,

which should include all shades from a modified Romanism to a mild Puritanism, or a tolerant Church of more narrow limits but not unfriendly to other forms of doctrine and worship, in either case the King was disappointed. He was thrown back on his dispensing prerogative, and the exercise of that was resented. The interference of Parliament with the Church, that had been Elizabeth's bugbear, had now become part of the constitution of the Realm. Though the House of Commons had not altered the Prayer Book as settled in Convocation, it had expressly safeguarded its rights of doing so. The Courts of High Commission and Star Chamber were abolished, and the clergy received no new powers of legislation or jurisdiction.

In the record of the Bedford Meeting we find difficulty made about acceptance of the pastorship in 1663, and at the end of 1663 in a strange hand the following note : ' Soon after this Church meeting all Conventicles (*i.e.* assemblies not under the regulation of the Canons of the Church of England) were forbid by Act of Parliament, no wonder then we find no account of another for the space of four and a half years.' When the record is resumed in 1668 there is sorrowful mention of ' many of the friends having in these troublous times withdrawn themselves from close walking with us.' The record begins again and is continued with regularity. It is often signed by John Bunyan, who had three years of liberty, 1672–1675, through the King's Declaration of Indulgence. The strife between King and Parliament for supremacy over the Church had still some years to run.

CHAPTER VI

BUNYAN IN THE STORM

The Bedford Meeting. Its claim to be an advance on the principles of Wycliffe, Luther, and Calvin. The duty of passive obedience.

It is high time that we should pass from the controversies and questionings of the age to the man whom they surrounded—still not attempting a narrative of his life, but confining ourselves to the part which he took, or refused to take, in that memorable strife. Paramount among the controversies of the day was that which concerned the limits of the authority of the State and of the Church over the conscience of the individual. We have seen the rebellion of the English State against the Papal power in the interests of national freedom in the sixteenth century. We have seen the State adopt certain forms of worship and doctrine as consistent with the Word of God, and the attempt made to conform all public worship and teaching to the standard so set up. We have seen the decision of the State questioned by Puritans within the Church, and the effort of the Stuarts to silence all such questionings and to suppress all irregularities of worship. We have seen the attempt made to set up in England the Scottish, *i.e.* the Presbyterian, ideal of a Church enforcing faith and morals with assistance from the secular arm. We have seen the formation of voluntary and independent congregations disowning not only all use of State power, but also of the power of any central or con-

trolling Church; the claim that the believer taught by the Scripture must join himself to a congregation which follows the Scripture model, and that the congregation so joined must be free of all external control. The demand for toleration has been pushed to its furthest limits and has been rejected by the nation.

It was natural that the Restoration should be accompanied by a reaction against religious toleration. Cromwell, his army, the very regicides, had all been champions of toleration. *Ergo*, religious toleration is a dangerous principle which lands nations in regicide and republicanism. *Ergo*, although the High Commission Court and Star Chamber have been abolished, although peaceable restoration of the Monarchy has been secured by promises of toleration, the safety of the State unquestionably demands the suppression of all Nonconformity, and the exclusion of Nonconformists from all civil office. There must be no indulgence, no exception. The safety of England depends upon securing religious uniformity by drastic legal enactments.

Among the first on whom the storm of persecution burst was John Bunyan. Without waiting for the Act of Uniformity, which was not passed till 1662, Francis Wingate, one of the justices of Bedford, committed Bunyan to prison under an Act of 35 Elizabeth for preaching at a religious meeting. This Act was an indirect outcome of Archbishop Whitgift's attempt to suppress Puritanism. It was aimed at the so-called Brownists, and especially at 'Martin Marprelate.' It forbade all religious meetings under penalty of imprisonment and, if submission was not made in three months, expulsion from the kingdom,

return thereto being punishable by death. The swift procedure of the Bedfordshire magistrate is evidence of the growing influence and popularity of Bunyan. He was already regarded as a dangerous man, who could not be suffered to be at large. In fact, he had been apprehended once before. 'The archers have shot sorely at him,' says John Gifford in 1658. How had this position been established?

Ten years before this arrest, John Bunyan, under his first serious religious impressions, had attended the parish church, and 'fallen in very eagerly with the religion of the times: to wit, to go to Church twice a day, and that too with the foremost: and there should very devoutly say and sing as others did, yet retaining my wicked life: but withal I was so overrun with a spirit of superstition that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things, both the high place, priest, cleric, vestment, service and what else belonging to the Church.'[1] All this Bunyan fixes as happening in the early days of the Commonwealth, about 1650. The vicar of his parish (Elstow), appointed during Laud's ascendancy, continued an unbroken reign right through the Commonwealth until 1664, two years after the Act of Uniformity. From which it is clear that as tinker of Elstow John Bunyan need not have come into conflict with the law, even if he had held some Puritan opinions, since the rigour of the law was not enforced at Elstow, either under Laud or under Cromwell.

At the end of 1655 or early in 1656, after the fiery storm of questionings described in 'Grace Abounding,' Bunyan had joined himself to a meeting at

[1] *Grace Abounding.*

Bedford. The story of this meeting as prefixed to its Register aptly illustrates the foregoing history :

'In this town of Bedford and the places adjacent there hath a long time been persons godly, who in former times (even when they remained without all form and order as to visible communion according to the testament of Christ) were very zealous according to their light not only to edify themselves, but also to propagate the gospel and help it forward, both by purse and presence, keeping always a door opened and a table furnished and free for all such ministers and Christians who showed their zeal and love to the gospel of Christ . . . men that in those times were enabled of God to adventure far in showing their detestation of Bishops and their superstitions. But, as I said, these persons with many more neither were, nor yet desired to be embodied in the fellowship according to the order of the gospel ; only they had in some measure separated themselves from the prelatical superstitions, and had agreed to search after the non-conforming men, such as in those days did bear the name of Puritans.'

These are the stages by which Puritans first separated themselves from prelatical superstitions, and then, under the influence of a pastor, formed themselves into a meeting, such as Robert Browne had contemplated. The meeting at Bedford was formed into a Church by John Gifford. It had not at first any confession of faith or creed. John Gifford, the Bedford pastor, on his death-bed wrote a farewell letter, which was from time to time read as the standard of Church fellowship.

'Concerning separation from the Church' (by

which Gifford means, of course, his own congregation) ' about baptism, laying on of hands, anointing with oil, psalms and any externals I charge you before the Lord Jesus Christ . . . that none of you be guilty of this evil.'

Thus Bunyan found himself, not by deliberate choice, but by the existence in Bedford of a fellowship of God-fearing persons, member of a Church established on the principle of ' faith in Christ without respect to this or that circumstance or opinion in outward and circumstantial things.' The tolerance, however, of John Gifford's Church was not haziness or doctrinal vagueness. It was not religious indifference, but intensity of religious conviction, that characterised these early congregations. Bunyan in his ' Holy City ' makes this point very clear :

' In the completing of the City of Jerusalem there was first altar work, then Temple work, and after this the building of the walls and completing of the city. These altar men, or these men in their altar work did figure out for us our holy and famous worthies, that before have risen up in their place, and shook off those relics of Anti-Christ that intrenched upon the princely office of our Lord and Saviour, even worthy Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, Melanchthon and Calvin. . . . After these there arose another people, not another with respect to Christianity but to further light. These be they that are for having the Church a select company of visible believers, walking in the faith and holiness of the gospel, which believers are for separating from the unconverted, and for building up one another an holy temple in the Lord through the Spirit.'

In the same spirit he writes :

'Huss, Bilney, Hooper, Cranmer, with their brethren, if they were now in the world would cry, "Our light and knowledge of the Word of the Testament of Christ was much inferior to the light that is this day broken forth, and that will yet daily, in despite of men and devils, display its rays and beams among the children of men." '

Bunyan, when he joined the meeting, was already well instructed in the faith. John Gifford, in his Preface to Bunyan's 'Sighs from Hell' (published 1658), one of Bunyan's early sermons, says, 'I have this to say that I verily believe God hath counted him fruitful and put him into the ministry, and though his outward condition and former employment was mean, and his human learning small, yet is he one that hath acquaintance with God, and is taught by His Spirit.' Bunyan's very first work, his controversy with the Quakers, begun in the first year of his ministry (1656), in 'The Law and Grace unfolded,' reveals this self-taught tinker, instructed only by the Bible and conversation with believers in the same humble rank of life as himself, as one who had attained a well-grounded, well-reasoned, and intensely practical system of faith. He was (1) a member of an independent congregation drawn together by the desire to live out in the world the teaching of Christ; (2) a minister by their appointment to 'a more ordinary and public preaching of the Word, not only to and amongst them that believed, but also to offer the Gospel to them that had not yet received the Faith thereof.' He was not unordained like Wycliffe's preachers. Nor was he in any sense illiterate, although

he had no library but his Bible, no teacher but the Holy Spirit.

Once convinced that he was called of God, and had received from Him a gift of ministry which it was his duty to exercise, Bunyan could accept no terms of release from prison, or even of bail after arrest, which prohibited him from preaching. At the end of 'Grace Abounding' he has preserved for us an interesting record of an attempt made to persuade him to come to terms with the law. His interviewer was the Clerk of the Peace, Cobb by name, who showed himself very friendly to 'neighbour' Bunyan. (That delightful 'neighbour' is worth noticing in connexion with the social life of the age. He was not 'Master' or, as we should say, Mr. Bunyan. Nor was he, as in modern parlance with the working classes he would be, plain 'Bunyan.' The 'neighbour' is not patronising, nor supercilious—but utterly friendly. Alas! it has perished from modern speech. We have no neighbours now.) Cobb presses neighbour Bunyan to submit to the laws of the land, and to do as much good as he can in a 'neighbourly way,' without holding meetings, for these tend to sedition, and are for this reason forbidden by law. Bunyan replies that he has a gift of preaching and is bound to exercise it. Then Cobb presses him hard, for he knows that Bunyan recognises the authority of Scripture. 'The King commands you, and he is ordained of God.' To which Bunyan replies: 'The law hath provided two ways of obeying: the one to do that which I, in my conscience, do believe that I am bound to do, actively; and when I cannot obey actively, then I

am willing to lie down, and to suffer what they shall do unto me.' Bunyan is no rebel, no anarchist. He accepts with all its consequences the rule of passive obedience, by which he means that if conscience forbids him to obey the law, he will quietly accept all the legal consequences of such disobedience.

Now Bunyan was already an important man, for he was a great preacher, and preachers were men of power in his day. Bunyan had all the makings of a revolutionary orator. He could draw crowds and hold them spellbound. He had all the makings of a revolutionary pamphleteer. He had imagination in a supreme degree. He had insight into the thoughts and minds of men. He had sympathy with the oppressed, and although at times, before his peace was made with God, he trembled at the thought of jumping off the hangman's ladder, all such fears had utterly vanished, and he did not know what fear was. The Stuarts were on the throne indeed, and the fires of rebellion seemed to be quenched. But still embers glowed below the ashes, embers that Bunyan could have easily fanned into flame. 'The insurrections could have been crushed?' Probably. But we must not forget that the disbanded survivors of Cromwell's Ironsides were in the background and formidable, if they had a leader. But such insurrections when crushed would have been excuses for further inroads on the liberties of the people. 'France,' says Figgis in the 'Cambridge Modern History,' 'gave to the world of thought the ideas of the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*,[1] and to that of fact the ideals of the Roi Soleil and the *Dragonnades*. Spain,

[1] Written by Duplesis-Mornay, a leader of the Huguenots.

which in the *Justiza* of Aragon had a model of freedom for all lands, closed her career with a lifeless despotism, based on the extinction by the Inquisition of all forces which made for freedom. . . . To the spiritual intensity of the Reformers, and the doctrinal exclusiveness of the Confessions, at once the highest and lowest expressions of the " theological age," we owe the combination of liberty with order, which is our most cherished possession to-day. If much is due to the virtues of these men, something also is owing to their vices.' [1]

Without at all admitting the writer's estimate of confessions of doctrine as 'vices,' we may be conscious that in their desire to build up visible Churches the early Reformers had laid themselves open to the charge of alliance with the secular power, and had suffered, as all religious movements must suffer, from such mixed marriages. It was characteristic of Bunyan's teaching that (1) It emphasised the love and free grace of God, and troubled little to insist on difficult questions of predestination or of the sacraments. (2) It recognised the limitations of the rights of conscience. This truth he gained from his controversies with the Quakers. 'Conscience' appears in the 'Holy War' as the 'Recorder' of the town. Our impression of the Recorder is that of a fussy, ineffective and timid adviser of the Mayor or Governor, whose duty lies in the sphere of

[1] *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iii. chap. xxii. How many of those who habitually omit the prayer for the King are aware that this chapter contains the following words: 'The claims advanced . . . in the words " King of Kings and Lord of Lords " are nothing but the assertion that civil society has a right to exist apart from its ecclesiastical utility. This was denied by Popes and Presbyterians.'

practical work, and has nothing to do with the deep mysteries of religion. The mysteries of Divine things are beyond his ken. The Spirit through the Word is Bunyan's ruler in the town of Mansoul. (3) It absolutely refused all support from the civil power, and needed none, for God was its protector. 'The Governors of the world,' says Bunyan in the 'Holy City,' published in the year after the Conventicle Act, 1664, 'need not at all to fear a disturbance from her, nor a diminishing of aught that they have. She will not meddle with their fields nor vineyards, neither will she drink of the water of their wells: only let her go by the King's highway, and she will not turn to the right hand or to the left, until she hath passed over their borders.' She hath 'a great wall about her, an high wall. It is great for compass, it encloseth every saint; it is great for thickness, it is compounded of the grace and goodness of God, both spiritual and temporal; and for height if you went from the utmost side to the utmost, then it is higher than Heaven, who can storm it? and for depth, it is lower than Hell, who can undermine it?'

The teacher who had this sublime confidence in the security of his Church was no man to raise rebellions, nor was he a man who could be frightened by persecution. If Montaigne was right in maintaining that the supreme question of his time was 'whether on the ground of religion resistance to legitimate authority was justifiable,' Bunyan did his country no small service when he taught his fellow-countrymen how fidelity to God was to be reconciled with obedience to the King'—that is, by

suffering, as Christ suffered, for the truth's sake. He would not have joined the Puritans in appealing to Parliament to reform the Church, nor would he have joined the Presbyterians in setting up a Church-State, nor would he have looked to synods or national assemblies to define the faith or to regulate worship. He looked to each congregation of the faithful to administer its own affairs under the guidance of the Spirit and the Word, and to offer the gospel to believers and to unbelievers, through a ministry of its own appointment.

It would be misleading, however, to infer that Bunyan would have been in favour of toleration of the Church of England as a State Church. The Bedford meeting-book makes it quite clear that he regarded the worship of the Church of England as sinful. Brother Whitbread is rebuked for that 'you have added now wickedness to your former wickedness in that you have in the face of the Canaanites that dwell in the land presented your person at that superstitious and idolatrous worship, that with force and cruelty is maintained in opposition to the true worship and worshippers of God.' So also Robert Nelson was cut off and cast out of the congregation, one of his offences being that 'in a great assembly of the Church of England he was openly and profanely bishoped after the anti-Christian order of that congregation to the great profanation of God's order, and heartbreaking of his Christian brethren' (1671).

CHAPTER VII

BUNYAN AND THE BIBLE

The Authorized Version. How Bunyan read and used the Bible.

About seventeen years before the birth of Bunyan the Puritans at the Hampton Court Conference, through their leader Dr. Reynolds, 'moved His Majesty that there might be a new translation of the Bible, because those which were allowed in the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the original.' Reynolds, it will be noted, ignores the Bishops' Bible, which was presented to the Queen in 1568. His reason for doing so is not very clear. It may have been because that Bible had never been appointed to be read in churches, or it may have been because the publication of it had been used in such a way as to discourage circulation of the Bible among the people. The editions printed were large and expensive. The Bishops' Bible appeared as an edition competing with and superseding the Geneva Bible, which, on account of its controversial notes, was out of favour with the authorities. At all events, whatever his reason was, Reynolds ignored the Bishops' Bible, and ignored also the Rheims Bible put out by the Roman Catholics. King James is reported to have said: 'I profess I could never see a Bible well translated in English: but I think that of all the Geneva is the worst. I wish

some special pains were taken for an uniform translation; which would be done by the best learned in both Universities, then revised by the Bishops, presented to the Privy Council, ratified by Royal authority to be read in the whole Church, and no other.'[1]

So the great work of the Revision was put in hand, and executed not only with substantial accuracy but also with 'rhythm, strength and melody' that have made it the most priceless of all possessions in the English tongue. It may well be that 'the rhythm called into being by Tyndale and Coverdale, reasserted itself in every revision, and that a large share of credit is due to earlier translators. Yet we have lived to see what injury Revisers can do to melody and rhythm, and we must not withhold from the Revisers of 1611 the praise which is their due. It now became possible for those who loved the Scripture to hear in church the same words that had become dear to them in their private devotions. Copies were printed which were not beyond the purchasing power of labourers and artisans. Bunyan speaks of three or four shillings as the price of a Bible, and three-and-sixpence a week was a fair average for the farm labourer's wage (say seventeen-and-sixpence in purchasing power of modern money).'[2]

But it is one thing for a book to be accessible, another for it to be purchased, yet another for it to be read, and another still for it to be read profitably. Bunyan could look back on the time when he would say: 'The Scriptures, what are they? A dead letter, a little ink and paper of three or four shillings price. Give me a ballad or a news book, "George on Horse-

[1] Fuller's *Church History of Britain*, vol. iii. p. 182.
[2] R. C. L. Fletcher's *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 537.

back" or "Bevis of Southampton." Give me some book that teaches curious arts, that tells of old fables, but for Scriptures I cared not.'[1] He does not mention the Bible among the books which that pious woman, his first wife, brought into his home. It is in connexion with his falling in with the Ranters and their books that he says: 'The Bible was precious to me in those days. And now, methought I began to look upon the Bible with new eyes, and read as I never did before; and especially the Epistles of the Apostle Paul were sweet and pleasant to me; and indeed, I was then never out of the Bible either by reading or meditation.'[2] Then it was that he began to discover the difference between the Word of God, as it stands by itself, and with saving operation from heaven. 'As it stands by itself, and is not seconded with saving operation from Heaven, it is called the Word only, the Word barely, or as if it were only the word of men (1 Thess. i. 5, 7; 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20; 1 Thess. ii. 18). Because then, it is only as managed by men, who are not able to make it accomplish that work. The Word of God, when in a man's hand only, is like the father's sword in the hands of the suckling child, which sword though never so well pointed, though never so sharp on the edges, is not able to conquer a foe, and to make an enemy fall and cry out for mercy, because it is but in the hand of a child. But now let the same sword be put into the hands of a skilful father—and God is both skilled and able to manage His sword—and then the sinner, and the proud helpers too, are both made to stoop and submit themselves: wherefore, I say, though the Word be the instrument, yet by itself it doth do no

[1] *A Few Sighs from Hell.* [2] *Grace Abounding.*

saving good to the soul; the heart is not broken, nor the spirit contrite thereby: it only worketh death, and leaveth men in the chains of their sins, still further bound over to eternal condemnation.

'But when seconded by mighty power, then the same Word is as the roaring of a lion, as the piercing of a sword, as a burning fire in the bones, as thunder, and as a hammer that dashes all to pieces. Wherefore from hence it is to be concluded that whoever has heard the Word preached, and has not heard the voice of the living God therein, has not yet had his heart broken, nor their spirits made contrite for their sin.'[1]

Bunyan's attitude to the Bible is consistent with these words throughout the whole of his works. Of his intimate acquaintance with it, and of its profound and far-reaching influence over him, there is no question. He tells us repeatedly that it was his library. That its words furnished his vocabulary, that its melodies enchanted his ear and moulded his speech and his writing, that its images inspired his imagination, that its instruction guided his conduct and framed his doctrine, that it nurtured his spiritual life and enriched his communion with God—of all these things there can be no doubt. Without the English Bible there could have been no John Bunyan. But it is equally certain that he was not open to the charge of being a Bibliolater. Indeed, it is remarkable that in his two great allegories the Bible does not occupy the prominence that we should have expected—that is, in 'Pilgrim's Progress' the place of a map of the road from the wicket-gate to the Celestial City, and

[1] *The Acceptable Sacrifice.*

in the 'Holy War' the place of a code or book of Law given by Immanuel for observance in the city. In popular estimation it can hardly be doubted that Bunyan would have been expected to give some such prominence as this to the Bible and to have represented it as the Pilgrim's Guide Book from first to last. But this is not the way in which Bunyan treats it. It is the book which fills him with terror of the doom of the City of Destruction. It is the sword—with which, by the way, he is not armed until he reaches the Palace Beautiful—the sword that deals the deadly blow to Apollyon, and the key that opens the dungeon of Doubting Castle. It is the mirror that takes the fancy of Mercy; the 'right Jerusalem blade' with which '*with a hand to wield it, and skill to use it*, a man may venture upon an angel with it.' It is a map for use in a difficult and miry wilderness. So also Immanuel says to Mansoul: 'Deck thyself' (*i.e.* with white raiment) 'according to My bidding, and make to thyself by My law straight steps for thy feet.' The Bible is unquestionably an instrument for the believer's use, but it is not the equivalent of an infallible Church, or an infallible Pope. The place of Kingship which belongs to Christ is not by Bunyan assigned to the Bible.

It was in the great conflict of his conversion that Bunyan experienced the difficulties which the Bible presents even to an awakened soul. It suggested to him almost as many doubts as it allayed. Had he faith? Could he work a miracle? Had the day of grace gone by? How terrible was original and inward pollution! 'I was more loathsome in my eyes than a toad.' Had Satan desired to have him? How his thoughts wandered in prayer! Had he sold

Christ and parted with Him? Was he like Judas, or Solomon, or Manasseh? Was he severed from Christ? These were some of the many questions which Bible study brought into his soul. These questionings haunted him for weeks, for months, sometimes for a whole year. They were allayed with texts which brought relief; but as one was allayed, so another took its place. 'The people of God would tell me of the promises. They might as well have told me to reach the sun with my finger. My heart shut itself up against the Lord, yet as to the act of sinning I was never more tender.' Driven into the depths of despair, 'yet like a child carried off by gypsies kicks and screams, so did I.' 'I did liken myself in this condition unto the case of a child, that is fallen into a millpit, who, though it could make some shift to scrabble, and sprawl in the water, yet because it could find neither hold for hand nor foot, therefore at last it must die in that condition.' [1]

There were texts, of course, which brought him comfort. One from the Apocrypha—which it took him a long time to run to ground—'Look at the generation of old. Did ever any trust in the Lord and was confounded?' Again, one from the Song of Solomon: 'Thou art fair, O my love.' The soul even when tempted is Christ's love. Or, again: 'My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth.' 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' 'Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.' 'Return, return, as if it holloaed after me.' 'This sin is not unto death.' 'This sentence stood like a millpost at my back. Next day at evening I went to seek

[1] *Grace Abounding.*

the Lord. 'I loved thee whilst thou wast committing this sin. I loved thee before. I love thee still. I will love thee for ever.' Once again, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' Some help he had from his pastor, Gifford, who 'pressed us to take heed that we take not any special truth upon trust, but cry mightily to God, that He would convince of the reality thereof, and set us down mightily therein by His Holy Spirit in the Word.' Note the conjunction of the Spirit with the Word and the relation of the two: '*by* His Spirit'—the living agent; '*in* the Word'—the means used.

But eventually it was not any text that brought him final peace, 'but one day as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly the sentence fell on my soul "Thy righteousness is in Heaven": and methought withal I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, as I say, as my righteousness; so that wherever I was or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, He wants my righteousness, for this was just before Him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.'[1]

Even then the storm was not wholly passed. There were still thunderings and lightnings crossing the sky that had seemed to be for ever clear. But whereas before unbelief, blasphemy, hardness of heart, questions about the being of God and Christ had troubled

[1] *Grace Abounding.*

him, now the case was otherwise : ' now was God and Christ continually before my face, though not in a way of comfort, but of exceeding dread and terror.' '. . . The Scriptures were now also wonderful things unto me. I saw that the truth and verity of them were the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven : those that the Scriptures favour they must inherit bliss, but those that they oppose and condemn must perish evermore. . . . Now I began to consider with myself that God had a bigger mouth to speak with than I had a heart to conceive with.'

It has been necessary to present this very bare outline of Bunyan's spiritual experience in order that readers might realise the living power which Bunyan found in the Word of God. It was not a collection of lifeless premises from which inevitable logical conclusions must follow—not like the Scriptures as the Rabbis treated them, or the works of Aristotle as the Schoolmen used them. To Bunyan they were living utterances fresh from the mouth of a living God, a sentence of life unto life, or of death unto death, according to the faith that received or the unbelief that refused them. In this spirit he appealed to them in confirmation of his teaching. ' Well, but give me the hearing,' he says in his Preface to ' Light for them that sit in Darkness,' ' take me to the Bible, and let me find in thy heart no favour, if thou find me to swerve from the standard. . . . I have not writ at a venture, nor borrowed any doctrine from libraries. I depend upon the saying of no man. I found it among the Scriptures of truth, among the sayings of God.' He had ventured his soul upon the words and had found by experience that they were true.

From this point of view it is right to understand Bunyan's use of the Bible, both for practical teaching and devout meditation. As a fair instance of use for practical teaching we may take a passage from the 'Life and Death of Mr. Badman.' When Bunyan illustrates the wrongfulness of buying as cheap as one can by the instances of Abraham and of David, he does not mean that their examples are to be slavishly and thoughtlessly followed in all their actions, but that the leading of a Spirit-taught conscience is in this affair confirmed by examples from Holy Scripture. He is not saying, 'This must be right because Abraham did it,' but 'Even Abraham did this because, in that far-off age, he knew that it was the conduct that God would approve.' A short quotation will illustrate our meaning:

'The same also may be said of buying; no man may always buy as cheap as he can, but must also use good conscience in buying; the which he can by no means use and keep, if he buy always as cheap as he can, and that for the reasons urged before. For such will make a prey of the ignorance, necessity and fondness of their chapman, the which they cannot do with a good conscience. When Abraham would buy a burying place of the sons of Heth, thus he said unto them: "Intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath in the end of his field; for as much as it is worth shall he give it me." He would not have it under foot, he scorned it, he abhorred it; it stood not with his religion or conscience. So also when David would buy a field of Ornan the Jebusite, thus he said unto him: "Grant me the place of *this*

threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord; thou shalt grant it me for the full price." He also, as Abraham, made conscience of the kind of dealing. He would not lie at catch to go beyond, no, not the Jebusite,—but will give him his full price for his field. For he knew that there was wickedness, as in selling too dear, so in buying too cheap, therefore he would not do it.'

'He knew that there was wickedness in it, therefore he would not do it'—a very different conclusion from the dryasdust use of the Bible: 'It must be wrong because he did not do it.'

Still more interesting is Bunyan's devotional use of Scripture. The Bible is to him what Nature is to the Fantastic Poets, a living treasury of the mind of God. Therefore he is not afraid to use it in fragments torn from the context, and with a freedom that would appal modern exegetes. There is no text so far off as to be out of his reach, if he can by its melody and its associations lift the soul heavenward. Conspicuous as this use is in every one of his works, it is nowhere more conspicuous than in his prison discourse, 'The Holy City.' The bars that bound John Bunyan's body were as wings to his soul. Never does his spirit soar heavenward with greater freedom, nowhere is the music that falls from his uplifted soul sweeter. Here is an instance—one instance where almost every paragraph is an example.

'When he saith that the street of the city was pure gold, he alludes to the floor in Solomon's Temple, which was overlaid with gold (Canticles iii. 10). By the floor of the Temple we are to understand the way of Holiness; and by the chariot of Solomon the

triumphant glory of that way. Again, in that he saith this street is gold, he would have us understand the worth and treasure that is laid up in the ways of God, and of a truly gracious heart. First, for the worth and treasure that is laid up in the ways of God. They beget light (Ps. cxix. 100), they change the heart, they lead from death, the devil and hell, to life, God, and the Kingdom of Heaven (Ps. cxix. 9). In them God walks, and those that walk there also are sure to meet with Him (Is. xliv. 5). O this way, it is the way "which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen." It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it; and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of corals, or of pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies (Job xxviii.). All the ways of God they are pleasantness, and all His paths are peace, and ought to be preferred before our necessary food (Ps. iii.).'

He who so used the Bible carried in his heart heavenly music.

We may conclude with a touching passage from the 'Grace Abounding,' which reveals Bunyan's use of the Bible—his search for treasure in it as opposed to mechanical or lifeless abuse of it:

'I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under, and yet at another time the whole Bible has been to me as dry as a stick; or rather, my heart hath been so dead and dry unto it, that I could not conceive the least drachm of refreshment, though I have looked it all over.'

CHAPTER VIII

BUNYAN AND THE CHURCH

The call of the Church and of Church fellowship. The attempt to make the visible Church an instrument for building up the Church Universal.

WHEN Bunyan was indicted before the justices at the Quarter Sessions in 1661, he was asked 'What he had against the Common Prayer Book?' but was cautioned against speaking irreverently of the book —a caution not undesirable altogether to-day. As he proceeded to state his views, said one of the justices: 'He will do harm: let him speak no farther.' Justice Keelin said: 'No, no, never fear him: we are better established than so: we know the Common Prayer Book hath been ever since the Apostles' time, and is lawful for it to be used in the Church.' [1]

It would be difficult to present better in a few words the animus that dictated the Act of Uniformity of 1662. For it was this same Keelin (or Kelynge) who prepared that Act for submission to Parliament. Clarendon describes him as a man of eminent learning and of eminent suffering. Presumably he had read or heard of ancient liturgies, or of the sources of some parts of the Prayer Book. Having suffered for it, he did not scruple to exaggerate its antiquity. He was a hot-headed man, 'fitter to charge Round-

[1] Appendix to Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*.

heads under Prince Rupert than to charge a Jury.' He represents the 'ecclesiastical Jingoism'—if such a phrase may be pardoned—that swept the nation off its feet and placed the Clarendon Code upon the Statute Book. Irreverence towards the Prayer Book was little short of blasphemy. The existence of this spirit in the nation may have contributed in some measure to the extraordinary conservatism of the Revision of 1662. A company of bishops of High Church proclivities handed on to us the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI, the high-water mark of our departure from Rome, with but slight, though not unimportant, alterations, and did not dare to amend it as Laud would have amended it, or to deal with it as the bishops of our own day have dealt with it.

On the other side stood Bunyan, a Churchman by birth and upbringing, who had once delighted in the service of the Church. But that was before God dealt with him. Then he had not known prayer as he knew it now. He had not learnt to pray with the Spirit. In the old days he had not known conviction of sin, nor the love of God in Christ to himself as a sinner: his spiritual eyes had not been opened, nor his heart warmed. He had not known the power of the Holy Spirit moving him to prayer and making intercession for him. Now that this great change had come over him, the Common Prayer appeared to him to be a presumptuous interference with the office of the Holy Spirit, an attempt made by bishops and others to dictate to the Holy Spirit—an attempt for which he could find no authority in Scripture. 'Peradventure,' he says in his treatise on Praying with the Spirit, written in 1663, 'you will say "By the

help of Common Prayer Book (I will address myself to God)" ; but that cannot do it unless it can open the eyes, and reveal to the soul all the things before touched. Which it cannot, it is evident, since it is the work of the Spirit only. . . . The Common Prayer Book will not do it, neither can any man expect that it should be instrumental that way, it being none of God's ordinances ; but a thing since the Scriptures were written, patch'd together one piece at one time, and another at another ; a mere human invention and institution, which God is so far from owning of, that He expressly forbids it with any other such like, and that by manifold sayings in His most blessed and holy Word. (See Mark vii. 7, 8 ; Col. ii. 10–23 ; Deut. xii. 31–32 ; Prov. xxx. 6 ; Deut. iv. 2 ; Rev. xxii. 16.)' '. . . Lord, what will be the fruit of these things, when for the doctrine of God there is imposed, that is, more than taught, the traditions of men? Thus is the Spirit of prayer disowned, and the form imposed ; the Spirit debased, and the form extolled ; they that pray with the Spirit, though never so humble and holy, accounted fanatics, and they that pray with the form, though with that only, counted the virtuous . . . look into the jails in England, and into the alehouses of the same ; and I know you will find those that plead for the Spirit of prayer in the jail and those that look after the form of men's invention only in the alehouse.'

These quotations might easily be extended, but enough has been adduced to show how impossible was the State Church for Bunyan on this ground only. It seemed to him to make true prayer impossible, and to substitute for such prayer dangerous

delusions, and to impose, to enforce, its false and unreal prayer upon those who found it contrary to Divine institution. But this was not Bunyan's only quarrel with the Church of his day. Equally intolerable, if not more intolerable, was the admission of open sinners to communion. 'I dare not,' says Bunyan in his 'Reason of my Practice of Worship,' 'hold communion with the openly profane. It polluteth God's ordinances; it violateth His law; it profaneth His holiness; it defileth His people, and provoketh the Lord to severe and terrible judgments.' To the objection that in all ages there have been the profane in the Church of God, he answers that 'in many ages it hath been so, but they were not openly profane when they were received, and if they were retained it was in order that they might repent: and, repentance failing, they were either cut off from the Church, or else they were cut off with the Church.' (Among many passages which Bunyan quotes I have not found any reference to the Tares.)

By communion Bunyan does not mean only the service of Holy Communion. He means the fellowship of the Church. Obviously his belief is fatal to the principle of a State Church. The very conception of such a Church was in his eyes fundamentally erroneous, so long as citizenship was compatible with open profanity—such as he witnessed in abundance round him. His Introduction to the 'Life and Death of Mr. Badman,' published in 1680, shows us society as Bunyan saw it, society which was consistent with membership of the Church of England. Our familiarity with nominal and unreal membership of our Church conceals from us the scandal of a Church

which was actually and by legal enforcement identical with citizenship.

'That which has made me publish this book is, 1. For that wickedness, like a flood, is like to drown our English world. It begins already to be above the tops of the mountains: it has almost swallowed all; our youth, middle age, old age, and all, are almost carried away of this flood. O debauchery, debauchery, what hast thou done in England! Thou hast corrupted our young men, and hast made our old men beasts; thou hast deflowered our virgins, and hast made matrons bauds. Thou hast made our earth to "reel to and fro like a drunkard"; it is in danger to "be removed like a cottage"; yea, it is, because transgression is so heavy upon it, like to fall and rise no more. O! that I could mourn for England and for the sins that are committed therein, even while I see that, without repentance, the men of God's wrath are about to deal with us, each "having his slaughtering weapon in his hand." Well, I have written, and by God's assistance shall pray that this flood may abate in England; and could I but see the tops of the mountains above it, I should think that these waters were abating.'

Now in a society where we are accustomed to a multiplicity of Churches, so much accustomed that it seems pedantic and narrow-minded to compare or contrast their merits, we have, in fact, become very faintly sensible of the true value of Church fellowship. The unhappy divisions of our own Church have had the same effect on our spiritual life. Church fellowship has become a matter of taste, and not infrequently a social cachet. We are paying the penalty for making

the bonds of our communion so loose that it hardly is a communion at all. Real religious intercourse is rare, and is only possible on conditions of close intimacy, and even so, quite infrequently. In the seventeenth century it was not so. Religion was the supreme interest of life to all who were seriously minded, and Church fellowship was in practice realised as a means of grace. Thus Bunyan writes in 'The Desire of the Righteous granted': 'Church fellowship rightly managed is the glory of all the world. No place, no community, no fellowship is adorned and bespangled with those beauties as is a Church rightly knit together to their head, and lovingly serving one another. "In His temple doth every one speak of His glory." Hence the Church is called the place of God's desire upon earth. "This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it." And again this the Church confesseth when she saith, "I am my beloved's and His desire is towards me."'

There was little to answer to this longing in the Church of the ordinary Cavaliers. To them, as to large circles to-day, Church fellowship was unintelligible and unreal. In Bunyan's spiritual life it was Christ on earth, and the appointed means of communion with Christ the Head.

Nowhere is this passionate Churchmanship more manifest than in what he says of 'the Church in the wilderness' in his 'House of the Forest of Lebanon.' 'None ever showed higher saints than were they in the Church in the wilderness. Others talked, these have suffered; others have said, these have done; these have voluntarily taken their lives by their hands, for they loved them not unto the death, and

have fairly, and in cold blood, laid them down before the world, God, angels, and men for the confirming of the truth which they have professed. These are pillars, these are strong ones indeed. It is meet therefore that the Church in the wilderness, since she was to resemble the house of the forest of Lebanon, should be furnished with those mighty ones. . . . The Church, the very name of the Church of God is beautiful in the world. . . . The very name of the Church is striven for of the world, but that is the Church which Christ has made so, her features also remain with herself.' Not less strongly is this desire for the Church and its unity expressed in 'The Holy City.' 'It is Anti-Christ that has brought all these crossings, bye lanes, and odd nooks that to this day many an honest heart doth lose itself in, but at this day they shall be otherwise minded, that is, made all to savour one thing and to walk one way, not biting and devouring one another as now. And indeed there is all reason that it should be thus, for the street is but one. There is but one God, our Lord Jesus, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, even as we are called in one hope of our calling. Now therefore, when the Saints have the rubbish of anti-Christian darkness and trumpery removed, then shall they have, as they also had of old, but one heart, one soul, one judgment, one mind, and shall with one heart and mouth glorify God.'

The unity of the Church of God—the purpose and design of God. It is the unity of God's elect, 'when all the rubbish and trumpery of anti-Christian darkness,' all the sectarian and denominational differences, vanish in the clear light of eternal day. Such visions

of the final unity of the Church are often decried as though they were somehow inimical to the unity of the Church on earth. The conception of the invisible Church known only to God is often called Calvinistic and uncatholic. If it were called Augustinian it would be more true. Brilioth, in his book 'The Anglican Revival,' has called attention to the strong hold that this idea had on Newman. He quotes from one of Newman's sermons words to which Bunyan would have heartily subscribed:

'There are in every age a certain number of souls in the world known only to God, unknown to us, who will obey the truth when offered to them, whatever be the mysterious reason that they do and others do not. These we must contemplate, for these we must labour, these are God's special care, for these are all things: of these and among these we must pray to be, and our friends with us, at the Last Day. They are the true Church, ever increasing in number, ever gathering in as time goes on; with them lies the Communion of Saints; they have power with God; they are His armies, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, who overcome princes of the Earth, and who shall hereafter judge Angels.'[1]

We must conclude that both Bunyan and Newman looked on the visible Church as a Divine instrument for the formation of the true Church. Both admitted the imperfections of the visible Church. Both insisted that these imperfections were not found in the true Church. But whereas Newman believed that the unity of the visible Church was inseparable from

[1] Brilioth, *The Anglican Revival*, p. 261.

its continuity and was secured to it by the Papal Vicegerent of Christ, Bunyan held to a spiritual unity secured by separation of the visible Church from the openly profane. He did not mean that human judgment could identify the elect, but that inclusion of notorious sinners was inconsistent with the idea of the Church. To use his own words: 'Now the reason why the Church may be said to have some within her that are non-elect and yet to be counted holy still, it is because the Church is to count of persons by their words and lives; they know not the heart absolutely and, therefore, if in word and life man be as he ought, he is to be counted a visible saint, and orderly ought to be received by the Church as such. So that, as I said before, these words of barring out sinners out of the Church, they are not to be understood so as if they intended that those should be debarred visible communion, that in word and life appeared visible saints, that are so judged by the rules of Christ's testament, but that such should be from it shut out that appeared visible sinners.'[1] Each local Church was to Bunyan a Palace Beautiful, 'built by the Lord of the Hill for the relief and security of pilgrims.' Ministers were the porters of this Palace, because 'as porters stand at the gates, and open to or shut upon those that attempt to enter in, so the ministers of Christ by the doctrine of the Twelve, do both open to, and shut the gates against, the persons that will be attempting to enter.' They have the power of the keys. The porter does not act by himself. 'He rings a bell at the sound of which comes out at the door of the

[1] *The Holy City*. See, however, p. 60.

house a grave and beautiful damsel named Discretion,' and she calls forth two or three more of the family, and these together put the pilgrim through a careful examination.

How far was any honest attempt made to realise this ideal of a pure visible Church, and how far was it successful? The answer is supplied in the recently published Register of the Bedford Meeting. There we find:

1. *Care taken as to admission of new member.*—'We do agree that such persons as desire to join in fellowship, if, upon the conference of our friends with them who shall be sent for that purpose, our said friends shall be satisfied of the truth of the work of grace in their hearts, then shall they desire them to come to the next Church meeting, and to wait near the place assigned for such meeting, that they may be called in.' If any doubt was entertained by the congregation, the postulant might be put back, but the usual 'process of admission was, for the candidate to be propounded at one Church meeting, and summoned to the next, where he declared the work of grace in his heart, and was formally accepted, referred, or rejected.'

2. *Discipline exercised over unsatisfactory members.*—Of such discipline there are numerous instances. Among the offences are drunkenness, scandal, uncleanness, bankruptcy, covetousness, gambling, disregard of the Lord's Day, marriage without the approval of the Church. Offences were punished with admonition, suspension of membership, and in extreme cases with excommunication. 'For the vindication of God's name, and showing our dislike of his sins, and also for his soul's health, we did then

and there cast him out of the Church, and deliver him up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, and that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' [1]

It is evident that the attempt to build up a pure visible Church was honestly made. The offences committed must be seen in their true perspective. They are on record, but there is no record of the lives of those who did not offend. Their character and manner of walk are taken for granted. 'On the whole,' writes Mr. J. B. Harrison, in his Preface to the Meeting Book, 'except for some bad periods, the moral standard of the congregation was high: most parish registers reveal a much worse state of affairs.'

Opinions will differ as to the wisdom of the exercise of public discipline by the Church. In 1662 the Church of England put on record for annual declaration each Ash Wednesday her strong wish that such open discipline at the beginning of each Lent should be restored. The expression of that wish is not to be found in the proposed Prayer Book of 1927. Excommunication is remitted to the conscience of sinners, who may, if they think fit, excommunicate themselves. There are also ostracisms left in the hands of the community which vary with the social rank of offenders. Penitents may, if they will, resort to the confessional, and submit to such penances as are imposed upon them. But public Church discipline can hardly be said to have an existence in the Church of England. Discipline has passed entirely into the hands of the State, and will presumably there

[1] The above list of offences is culled from the whole book. The record for the time covered by Bunyan's membership and pastorate of the Church is fairly clear of serious moral offences.

remain so long as that Church is an Established Church. It is possible that out of this quarter may arise some revival of Bunyan's protest against the condition of the Church of his own time.

A few words must be added as to Bunyan's views of the sacraments. Being a member of a congregation which favoured adult baptism, he was himself baptised as an adult. But he was very clear in his own mind that the controversies which raged among the Anabaptists were fatal. 'Baptism with water,' he says (in his 'Peaceable Principles'), 'is neither a bar nor bolt to communion of Saints, nor a door nor inlet to communion of Saints.' He will not even allow that infant baptism should be a bar to fellowship. 'Being commended to bear with the infirmities of each other we suffer infant baptism: it being indeed in our eyes a sin, but in theirs, they say, a duty, till God shall otherwise persuade them' ('Differences about Water Baptism'). But he appeals with all his force 'to those that are visible saints by calling, that stand at a distance from one another, "Brothers, CLOSE, CLOSE, be one as the Father and Christ is one."'

Of the Lord's Supper he says in the same work that it 'is more binding than baptism. It is a part of worship which Christ hath instituted for His Church. It is a duty incumbent on the Church as a Church, and on every member of the body.' He speaks also warmly of blessed experiences in connexion with it.

But he does not hesitate to say 'Baptism and the Supper of the Lord have, by being wrested out of their places, been a great affliction to the godly both in this and other ages. What say you to breaking of bread, which the Devil by abusing made an engine

in the hands of Papists to burn, hang and draw thousands? What say you to John of Leyden? What work did he make by the abuse of the ordinance of water in baptism? And I wish this age had not given cause, through the church-rending spirits that some are possessed with, to make complaints of this matter.'

We cannot fully appreciate Bunyan's comparative indifference to the sacraments till we remember the supreme value that he attached to Church fellowship. The bond of that fellowship was faith in Christ manifested in a holy life. He would not have separations or exclusions on any other ground. For separation from the Church was an awful catastrophe.

> 'The man that worthily rejected is
> And cast out of this house, his part in bliss
> Is lost for ever, turns he not again
> True faith and holiness to entertain.
> Nor is it best for those who are thus cast out
> Themselves to flatter, or to go about
> To shift the censure; nothing here will do
> Except a new conversion thou come to.
> He that is bound on earth is bound in Heaven,
> Nor is his loosing, but the sin forgiven.
> Repentance too forgiveness must precede,
> Or thou must still abide among the dead.'[1]

[1] *A Discourse of the Building of the House of God.*

CHAPTER IX

BUNYAN AND FOX

The inner light. Christ without and Christ within. The fundamental difference between Bunyan and Fox.

To those who know the Society of Friends, either by their activities, characters, and lives to-day, or through such works as L. V. Hodgkin's very delightful 'Book of Quaker Saints,' it comes with a shock to hear that the first literary efforts of the author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress' were fierce controversies with the Quakers.

There was so much that was similar in the origin and upbringing of the two men, their aims were in so many respects identical, and their fortunes or misfortunes so much alike, that we should have been prepared to hear of the closest alliance between them. But that which separated them was a fundamental distinction in spiritual experience, a distinction which three centuries have not effaced—a distinction that is never likely to be effaced.

George Fox was born in 1624, four years before Bunyan, in the Leicestershire village of Fenny Drayton, not more than forty miles distant from Elstow. He was a weaver's son, and the weavers are a kind of aristocracy among the working folk of the Midlands. Christopher, George's father, might have been civil or even friendly to neighbour Bunyan, John's father, had he called him in from his tramp through the

countryside, to mend a saucepan or to sharpen his wife's scissors. But Christopher would not have forgotten that he was a Churchwarden, not a man to rub shoulders with 'Christopher Sly.' He would never have allowed his George to run wild as our John was allowed to run wild. Indeed, he had high thoughts for his son's future, and hoped one day to make a parson of him.

So we have no record of George Fox frequenting the alehouse, or joining the bellringers, or dancing on the village green, or playing tipcat on Sunday. He rejoiced the heart of his devout mother by his piety, his indifference to childish games, his love of reading: 'When he saw older people behaving in a rowdy or frivolous way, it distressed him, and the little boy used to say to himself, "If ever I come to be a man, surely I will not be so wanton."'[1] 'When I came to eleven years of age,' he says himself in his Journal, 'I knew pureness and righteousness; for while I was a child I was taught how to walk so as to be kept pure, both inwardly to God, and outwardly to man, and to keep Yea and Nay in all things'—that last a noted characteristic of the upright Midland weaver. George did not start, like poor John, from the City of Destruction.

It was this ingrained love of sincerity, his inflexible 'Verily,' gaining him both ridicule and respect, that led to his dissatisfaction with the religious life that he saw around him. He came of age during the Civil War, and when that was over, having, unlike our John, taken no part in it, though Naseby was but sixteen miles from his home, he was dismayed to find

[1] Hodgkin's *Book of Quaker Saints*, p. 38.

that the Presbyterians and Puritans who dispossessed the old parsons were not up to his standard of absolute sincerity. These 'professors,' as he calls them, 'sought to be acquainted with me, but I was afraid of them, for I was sensible they did not possess what they professed.' Nor did he, wandering among them, find any who satisfied him, except some 'Shattered Baptists,' so called 'because they had broken off from the other Baptists in the neighbourhood who did the Lord's work negligently and did not live up to what they professed.' Surely our John's Bedford Meeting answered to this description of Shattered Baptists.

Then followed the experience which George Fox describes as follows: 'With these (*i.e.* Baptists) I had some meetings and discourses, but my troubles continued, and I was often under great temptation. I fasted much, walked abroad in solitary places many days, and often took my Bible and sat in hollow trees and lonesome places till night came on, and frequently in the night walked about by myself. . . . O, the everlasting love of God to my soul when I was in great distress! When my troubles and torments were great, then was His love exceeding great. . . . When all my hopes in all men were gone so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, O then, I heard a Voice which said, "There is only even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition." When I heard it, my heart did leap for joy!' And again a little later, 'I saw the Infinite Love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of

darkness. In that I saw the infinite love of God, and had great openings. Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword, into the Paradise of God. All things were made new, and all the creation gave another smell to me beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, innocency, and righteousness, being renewed up to the image of God by Christ Jesus . . . great things did the Lord lead me into, and wonderful depths were opened to me, beyond what can by words be declared; but as people come into subjection by the Spirit of God, and grow up in the image and power of the Almighty, they may receive the word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the eternal Being.' [1]

Now it would not be difficult to find passages in Bunyan's works superficially very similar. Thus his 'Come and Welcome to Jesus' ends with like mystic fervour: 'All thy strange, passionate, sudden rushings forward after Jesus Christ, coming sinners know what I mean, they also are helps from God. Perhaps thou feelest at some times rather than at others, strong stirring press of heart to fly to Jesus Christ; now thou hast at this time a sweet and stiff gale of the Spirit of God, filling thy sails with the fresh gales of His good Spirit; and thou ridest at these times upon the wings of the wind, being carried out beyond thyself, beyond most of thy prayer, and also above all thy fears and temptations. Coming sinner, hast thou not, now and then, a kiss of the sweet lips of Jesus Christ, I mean some blessed word dropping like a honeycomb upon thy soul to revive

[1] Hodgkin's *Book of Quaker Saints*, p. 55.

thee, when thou art in the midst of thy dumps? Does not Jesus Christ Himself give thee glimpses of Himself, though, perhaps, thou seest Him not so long a time as one may tell twenty? Hast thou not sometimes, as it were, the very warmth of His wings overshadowing the face of thy soul, that gives, as it were, a gload upon thy spirit, as the bright beams of the sun do upon thy body, when it suddenly breaks out of a cloud, though presently all is gone away? Well, all these things are the good hand of thy God upon thee, and they are upon thee to constrain, to provoke, and to make thee willing to come, coming sinner, that thou mightest in the end be saved.'

We have in these last words, 'that in the end thou mayest be saved,' the attitude which John Bunyan would have taken to the experience of George Fox. For George it was final. 'Then travelled I in the Lord's service, as He led me.' John would have said: 'There can none be saved, but they that have the Spirit of Christ within them. But it is not the Spirit of Christ given to the elect that doth work out the salvation of their souls within them, for that was obtained by the blood of Jesus Christ upon the Cross.'[1] And again: 'The new birth is wrought by the Spirit coming into the soul and showing it its lost condition without the obedience of the Son of Mary the Son of God; and His freeness and willingness to give Himself and all His things unto it; which being done, the man is hereby given up to God and is become a new creature.'[1]

Here we see the fundamental difference between the two teachers, and that in despite of apparently

[1] *A Vindication of Gospel Truths opened according to the Scriptures.*

similar experience. The opening, or revelation, that came to Fox was this : ' Every man was enlightened by the Divine light of Christ, and I saw it shine through all and they that believed in it came out of condemnation, and came into the light of life, and became the children of it : but they that hated it and did not believe it were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the Light, without the help of any man, neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures, though afterwards in searching the Scriptures I found it.' [1] To which John Bunyan's reply would be :

' Though Christ, as He is God, doth give a light to every one that comes into the world, which light is conscience (as they themselves confess), yet it doth not follow that this conscience is the Spirit of Christ, or the work of grace wrought in any man whatsoever ; for every one hath conscience, yet every one hath not the Spirit of Christ.' [2]

From George Fox's teaching of the Inner Light followed (1) a serious doctrinal divergence between him, and not only Bunyan, but all who were then counted orthodox, and (2) yet more serious practical consequence.

(1) *Doctrinal Divergence.*—The Quakers were led to a distinction between Christ without and Christ within. ' They will own,' says Bunyan, that ' salvation was obtained by Christ ; but come close to the thing, and you will find, that they corrupt the word, and only mean thus much, That salvation is wrought out by Christ as He is within, and by it (though not

[1] *Encyclopædia of Ethics and Religion :* article ' Friends, Society of.'
[2] *Some Gospel Truths opened.*

warranted by the Scripture) they will fight against the truth: Namely that salvation was obtained for sinners by the man that did hang on the Cross on Mount Calvary, between two thieves, called Jesus Christ.' He boldly challenges the Quakers to say: 'What Scripture have you to prove that Christ is, or was, crucified within you, dead within you, risen within you, ascended within you?'[1]

We have only to remember what deliverance Bunyan found from his soul agony in the thought of Christ his righteousness at the right hand of God, to see how utterly impossible it was for him to put any trust in the work of the Spirit within him, however manifest that work might be. It could not be the righteousness, the infinite righteousness of God. 'It was glorious to see His exaltation, and the worth and prevailing of all His benefits, and that because of this: now I will look from myself to Him, and should reckon that all those graces of God that now were green in me, were yet but like those cracked groats and fourpence halfpenny pieces, that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunks at home! Oh! I saw my gold was in my trunk at home! In Christ, my Lord and Saviour! Now Christ was all; all my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my sanctification and all my redemption.'[2]

(2) *Serious Practical Consequences.*—The inner light, according to the conceptions of their age, was for the Quaker 'necessarily either wholly human or wholly Divine. To make it human meant denial of the need for both revelation and salvation; hence it

[1] *Vindication of Gospel Truths opened*, etc.
[2] *Grace Abounding.*

was claimed as absolutely Divine. But this involved the infallibility of each person to whom the light was given, and the ousting of human faculties from any place in dealing with the things of God. Man had no religious faculty requiring cultivation: religious instruction was needless; the more his mind was emptied—the more it became like a sheet of blank paper—the cleaner would it be for the writing of Divine oracles.'[1]

It followed inevitably that, as ignorant and enthusiastic men and women fell under the compelling spell of George Fox's teaching, some of them would be carried away very far from his moorings. They had not his devout home training. They had not his intimate knowledge of the Bible. The climax was reached in the unhappy Naylor, who believed himself to be an incarnation of Christ, and was accepted as such by deluded multitudes of admirers. Bunyan saw as early as 1656 to what results their principles were carrying the Quakers.

'Now the devil begins to run them through difficulties: and now like Baal's priests they must lance themselves with knives. Now Quakers are changed to the laws of the world. Now they must wear no hatbands: now they must live with bread and water: now they must give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, which bids them abstain from marriage, and commands them to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which know and love the truth. Now they must not speak except the Spirit moves them, though when it moves, they will

[1] Edward Grubb, *Authority and the Light Within.*

speak such and such blasphemies, and vent such horrible doctrines, that it makes me wonder to see the patience of God, in that He doth not command either the ground to open her mouth and swallow them, or else suffer the devil to fetch them away alive, to the astonishment of the whole world!'[1]

It was natural that men who were guilty of the extravagances of some of the early Quakers, and specially guilty of the interruption of gospel meetings by unpleasant questions, grimaces, and violent denunciations, should be thus severely handled by Bunyan. Persecutions, more severe than any that were the lot of other sects, purged out this dross, and brought to light a marvellous power of God that had entered into the world. There is no such record of conversions, of miraculous happenings, of building up a new social conscience and new social order, attendant on the preaching of Bunyan, as is associated with the prophetic work of Fox. Bunyan was never driven by the Spirit to enter 'Steeple houses,' to challenge preachers for proof that the Bible was the Word of God. Far, far from Bunyan's world were Fox's three foundation truths: (1) That all Christians are believers, Protestants and Papists alike. (2) That Christ was come to teach the people Himself. (3) That the Temple in which God wishes to dwell is in the hearts of His children. Far off indeed as Fox preached his doctrine, although Bunyan attached a like importance to a holy life and had a like indifference to shadowish and circumstantial things. But the difference between the two was fundamental, and it lay in their different beliefs as to the relation between God

[1] *Some Gospel Truths opened.*

and humanity. 'There are no men in this day,' says Bunyan, 'that have more opposed the light, glory, and lustre of the gospel, than those, as the Quakers and others, that have set themselves up and their own humanity as the essential parts of it.' Time has brought the opposition into light more clearly than in Bunyan's days. Then a common desire for holiness, a common opposition to sacerdotalism, a common faith in the reality and immediacy of communion with God went far to conceal the deeply seated difference. But as the Quakers found it necessary to insist on enlightenment of conscience, and so to put more trust in education, and in reason, they more and more blurred that distinction between the human and the Divine which is essential to all Puritan faith. 'Now,' says W. C. Braithwaite in Hastings' 'Encyclopædia of Ethics and Religion,' 'Quakerism sees no opposition between the human and the Divine, and alike in the Scripture, the Church, and individual experience, it expects to find the Divine illumination in partnership with human faculties. It recognises the need for correcting personal illumination by the Light which has come to the race in science, history, and literature. It is beginning to realise that the prophetic type of religion calls in an especial degree for a broad and expansive education.'[1] Thus we are brought very near to the Hegelian teaching of T. H. Green, who goes so far as to say: 'God is for ever reason, and His communication, His revelation, is reason, not however abstract reason, but reason as taking a body from, and giving light to, the whole system of experience, which makes the

[1] *Encyclopædia of Ethics and Religion:* article 'Friends, Society of.'

whole history of men.'[1] There is not much room here for an inspired tinker whose library is the Bible.

To have lessened his hold upon Christ without him, and to have substituted for this Christ any inner light would have been to Bunyan spiritual death. For him spiritual life had not begun until the Spirit had convinced him of his entire corruption and unfitness for God. 'Not until the Spirit has shown us all our righteousness as filthy rags, that we cannot believe in Christ Jesus in our own strength, that if we do not believe we perish everlastingly, not till then are we savingly convinced by the Spirit of Christ, possessed with an endless desire for the Lord Jesus, and dissatisfied with anything below the blood of the Son of God to purge our conscience withal. And then we never think we have faith enough.'[2] In short, for Bunyan the gospel was 'the doctrine' (or rather the experience) of the forgiveness of sins freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and this experience is to be distinguished from the effects which it produces—faith, hope, repentance, and newness of life.

For Fox righteousness is the perfecting of the Divine which is inherent in man; for Bunyan it is the acceptance of the righteousness of God wrought out for man by the historic God-man Christ Jesus, and the surrender of the soul to the indwelling of a power which is not human but wholly Divine.

[1] *Works of T. H. Green*, iii. 239.
[2] *How to know whether the Spirit of Christ*, etc.

CHAPTER X

THE VITALITY OF BUNYAN

Contrast of Bunyan with Milton, and with Dryden, the Court poet. The realism, sane humanity, and spiritual power of Bunyan.

If vitality and popularity be tests of literary greatness, few authors can be found even in the same class as John Bunyan. There are, no doubt, other tests and far more important tests, but the man who can retain the ear of multitudes of all nations three centuries after his death, and that by a purely spiritual appeal, must be counted among the small company that has achieved literary immortality. From this standpoint we may compare three great religious leaders of the seventeenth century—Fox, Baxter, and Bunyan. Fox founded a great religious community, but how few, outside that community, read his Journal to-day! How many copies could be found among the homes of the poor? Baxter wrote two works that flourished and were widely circulated after his death—the 'Saint's Everlasting Rest' and the 'Call to the Unconverted.' Both of these are out of print, save for a Gaelic translation of the 'Call to the Unconverted.' Of Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' the editions to-day are numerous: translations run into the hundreds, and the flow of supplies has been continuous ever since it first appeared. It is one of the great classics of the English tongue, and one that has found its way, as no other has, into the homes and hearts of the poor.

Explanations of this popularity are so abundant that it seems unnecessary to add to their number. But the scheme of the book suggests a few comparisons of Bunyan with some of his contemporaries, and especially with Milton, who for imaginative genius takes rank beside him.

Our first comparison shall be of Milton's 'Garden of Eden' with Bunyan's 'Pleasant River,' not, of course, by way of depreciation of Milton, but to set beside each other the picture which is born of the poetry of the Renaissance, and that which is the reflection of Biblical study upon the mirror of a rustic, country-loving genius.

Milton thus describes the bower of Eden :

> 'Thus talking hand in hand alone they passed
> On to their blissful bower : it was a place
> Chosen by the Sovereign Planter, when He framed
> All things to man's delightful use : the roof
> Of thickest covert was inwoven shade,
> Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew
> Of firm and fragrant leaf : on either side
> Acanthus and such odorous bushy shrubs
> Fenced up the verdant wall ; each beauteous flower,
> Iris all hues, roses, and jesamine,
> Reared high their flourish'd heads between and wrought
> Mosaic, underneath the violet,
> Crocus and hyacinth with rich inlay
> Broider'd the ground.'

Now this bower, in spite of the music of the verse, is a quite impossible bower except on the hypothesis that all flowers blossomed together and continuously in Eden, a most monotonous arrangement. It is the

conventional bower of a town-bred poet who has never been intimate with a garden.

Now let us turn to Bunyan's 'River beyond the plain called "Ease"':

'I saw then that they went on their way to a pleasant river; which David the King called "the River of God," but John "the River of the Water of Life." Now their way lay just upon the bank of the river; here therefore Christian and his companions walked with great delight; they drank also of the water of the river, which was pleasant, and enlivening to their weary spirits; besides, on the bank of the river, on either side, were green trees that bore all manner of fruit; and the leaves of the trees were for medicine; with the fruit of these trees they were also much delighted; and the leaves they eat to prevent surfeit, and other diseases, that are incident to those that heat their blood by travels. On either side of the river was also a meadow, curiously beautiful with lilies, and it was green all the year long. In this meadow they lay down, and slept; for here they might lie down safely. When they awoke they gathered again of the fruit of the trees, and drank again of the water of the river, and then lay down again to sleep.'

With singular felicity Bunyan transfers the Oriental imagery of the Revelation to the countryside of Bedfordshire. The touch of the 'leaves that prevent surfeits and other diseases that are incident to those that heat their blood by travels' is inimitable. It brings the trees, the fruit, the leaves into the world of reality which is the highest flight that imagination can attain. The tramping tinker needs no bower—

indeed when he enters an arbour he gets into trouble —he lies down on the grass, sleeps, and when he wakes, drinks and goes to sleep again. The world of the Revelation is a real world to John Bunyan, and he makes it real to us.

Another instance of the contrast between the imagination of Milton and that of Bunyan may be found in their descriptions of the armies of God. Both writers had seen battle-fields, and Bunyan had actually fought in the ranks. Both had felt the emotions that battle array excites. Both carried this emotion into the region of the heavenlies, and desired to carry us thither with themselves. Milton's description is in his most classic style :

> 'So spake the sovereign voice, and clouds began
> To darken the hill, and smoke to roll
> In dusky wreaths, reluctant flames the sign
> Of wrath awaked ; nor with less dread
> The loud ethereal trumpet from on high 'gan blow ;
> At which command the powers militant,
> That stood for heaven in quadrate joined
> Of union irresistible, moved on
> In silence their bright legions, to the sound
> Of instrumental harmony, that breathed
> Heroic ardour to adventurous deeds,
> Under their godlike leaders, in the cause
> Of God and His Messiah.'

By this we may set Bunyan's march of Emmanuel in the town of Mansoul :

'These were Emmanuel's captains, these their standard bearers, their colours, and their truncheons, and these the men under their command . . . the Prince Himself riding in His chariot at the head of them.

'But when they set out for their march, O, how the

trumpets sounded, their armour glittered, and how the colours waved in the wind. The Prince's armour was all of gold, and it shone like the sun in the firmament. The captain's armour was of proof, and was in appearance like the glistering stars. There were also some from the Court that rode reformados for the love that they had to King Shaddai and for the deliverance of Mansoul.

'Emmanuel, when He had thus set forward to deliver the town of Mansoul, took with Him, at the command of His Father, forty-five battering rams and twelve siege slings to whirl stones withal. Every one of these was made of pure gold; and these they carried with them in the heart and body of their army, all along as they went to Mansoul.'

While we must unhesitatingly concede to Milton the grandeur of diction, the sublime elevation of poetic power, we are also conscious that his armies are purely armies of the sky, and are without earthly counterpart. Bunyan, on the other hand, assures us that he is describing realities, and he makes good his claim:

> 'Let no man, then, count me a fable-maker
> Nor make my name or credit a partaker
> Of their derision; what is in view
> Of mine own knowledge, I dare say is true.
> I *saw* the Prince's armed men come down
> By troops, by thousands, to besiege the town;
> I saw the captains, heard the trumpets sound
> And how His forces covered all the ground.'

It is even more interesting to compare or contrast the two writers when Milton is deliberately forsaking his classic guides and taking us to the common ground that was so dear to the heart of Bunyan. Both of

them have pictured for us the break of day. Milton, as follows :

> ' To hear the lark begin his flight
> And singing startle the dull night
> From his watch tower in the skies,
> Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;
> Then, to come in spite of sorrow
> And at my window bid good morrow,
> Through the sweetbrier or the vine,
> Or the twisted eglantine ;
> While the cock with lively din
> Scatters the rear of Darkness thin ;
> And to the stack or the barn door
> Stoutly struts his dinner before.
> Oft list'ning how the hounds and horn
> Cheerily rouse the slumbering morn,
> From the side of some hoar hill
> Through the high wood echoing still.' [1]

By this we may set a passage from Bunyan's ' Holy City,' less perfect perhaps, but not unworthy of comparison :

' Never was fair weather after foul—nor warm weather after cold—nor a sweet and beautiful spring after a heavy, and nipping, and terrible winter, so comfortable, sweet, desirable and welcome to the poor birds and beasts of the field, as will be that day to the Church of God. Darkness ! It was the plague of Egypt ; it is an empty, forlorn, desolate, solitary, and discomforting state ; wherefore light, even the illuminating grace of God, especially in the measure that it shall be communicated unto us at this day, it must needs be precious. In light there is warmth and pleasure ; it is by the light of the sun that the whole universe appears unto us distinctly, and it is by the

[1] *L'Allegro.*

heat thereof that everything groweth and flourisheth. . . . Now also will all the pretty robins and little birds in the Lord's field most sweetly send forth their pleasant notes, and all the flowers and herbs of His garden spring. . . . You know how pleasant this is even to be fulfilled in the letter of it, not only to birds and beasts, but to men; especially is it to such men that have been for several years held in the chains of affliction.

'The Holy City' is based on a prison discourse, and, as we read, we are conscious of a glorious spring morning bursting through the narrow, barred windows of Bedford gaol. We see the sunshine, we rejoice in the warmth, and through the haze that hangs over the waters of the Ouse we discern the outlines of the Holy City, not far off, but very near to us in the promise of the glorious spring morning. To do greater justice to the brave and cheerful spirit that produced 'The Holy City' we must remember that Bunyan was not only a prisoner, but a prisoner constantly assailed with fresh tidings of the fury of his persecutors. The Corporation Act of 1661 was followed by the Uniformity Act of 1662, the Conventicle Act of 1664, and the Five Mile Act of 1665. Bunyan's 'Holy City' appeared in 1666. We are prepared to read hard words about persecutors, and we are not disappointed. Babylon is contrasted with Zion, the false Church with the true, and in plainest terms the ruin and destruction of Babylon are foretold. Babylon is not precisely identified with the Church of Rome; it may be suspected that the persecuting Church of England is not quite out of the picture. 'And never talk of what thou wast

once, for though thou wast full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty, though thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God, yea though every precious stone was one time thy covering, and thou the very anointed cherub that covereth, walking upon the mountain of God, and in the midst of stones of fire, yet, because —by reason of the multitude of thy merchandise— thou hast sinned, and art filled with violence. Therefore shall God cast thee out.' In spite of such denunciations as this 'The Holy City' is a work that is full of hope, inspires hope, and ends on a strong note of hope. Nor are we to suppose that Bunyan looked for a kingdom of saints shortly to be established by violence. He definitely dissociates himself from all such anticipations. But he is full of expectation of that millennium which sustained the early Church in the days of its persecution. 'Blessed is he whose lot it will be to see this holy city descending, and lighting upon the place that shall be prepared for situation and rest. Then will be a golden world; wickedness shall then be ashamed, especially that which persecutes the Church. Holiness, goodness, and truth shall then with great boldness, countenance, and reverence walk upon all the face of the earth. . . . It will then be always summer, always sunshine, always pleasant, green, fruitful and beautiful to the sons of God.' How dearly Bunyan loved the sunny countryside. He was never far from heaven when he looked on it, or even thought of it.

The same year, 1666, was Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis*, when he congratulated London on recovery from the plague (1665) and the fire (1666). Let us hope that poor Bunyan never heard of this production,

the work of a man bred an Anabaptist, who ended his days in the Church of Rome, which he joined when the Romanist King ascended the throne. Dryden dedicates his poem to the City of London in the following terms: 'To you, therefore, this year of wonders is justly dedicated, because you have made it so. You are now as Phœnix in her ashes, and, as far as Humanity can approach, an emblem of the suffering Deity; but Heaven never made so much piety and virtue to leave it miserable. I have heard, indeed, of some virtuous people who have ended unfortunately, but never of any virtuous nation. Providence is engaged too deeply when the cause becomes so general.' In the next year the Dutch came up the Medway. A short specimen will suffice to illustrate the gulf that separates Bunyan from Dryden.

'Thy threatenings, Lord, as Thine Thou may'st revoke,
But if immutable and fixed Thy stand,
Continue still Thyself to give the stroke,
And let not foreign foes oppress the land.

Th' Eternal heard, and from the heavenly quire
Chose out the cherub with the flaming sword:
And bade him swiftly drive th' approaching fire
From where our naval magazines were stored.

. . . . . .

The fugitive flames chastised went forth to prey
On pious structures, by our fathers rear'd;
By which to Heaven they did effect the way
Ere faith in Churchmen without works was heard.'

It would have amazed Dryden to be told that his works would be dead, while Bunyan's would survive. Yet who can wonder?

The truth is that Bunyan was endowed with, and by the help of the Bible cultivated, that love of the work of God in nature which is the rustic's most priceless heritage. Where the townsman passing through the fields sees dull monotony, the countryman is always seeing something new, new movements of birds and beasts, new effects of light and shade, new play of colour on trees and hedges, new combinations of clouds in the sky. His ear is attent to hear fresh notes of music in the song of birds, the rustle of leaves, the murmur of brooks. If the love of God has captured his heart all that he sees and hears echoes for him his Father's voice, and calls up memories from sacred psalms and outpourings of prophecy. He is an educated man though he has but little book learning. Such a man in high degree, some will think in even higher degree than the great Milton, was John Bunyan.

Being thus a true child of nature he was gifted with sane humanity far above the standard of his age. There are, indeed, some very terrible passages in his 'Sighs from Hell,' and his 'Resurrection of the Dead.' They can be paralleled in almost every theologian of his day and of many preceding centuries. They can be paralleled in some measure from the New Testament. 'The severity of God' is banished from our thoughts, from our literature, from our sermons to-day. 'They will not see, but they shall see,' are words not to be lightly dismissed. But against these denunciations may be set two sentences which surely may be weighed in the scale when Bunyan is tried: 'I am persuaded that there are many things now done by the best of saints that they will gladly disown and

be ashamed of: yes, which they have done, and do still with great devotion.' And again: 'Every bit, every drop, every rag, and every night's harbour, though but in a wisp of straw, shall be rewarded before men and angels.' But it is in his attitude to witchcraft that the humanity of Bunyan is especially conspicuous. There was plenty of room for denunciation of witches in 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' in 'The Holy City' and in 'The Holy War.' But they are not even hinted at. The word 'witch' is not to be found in Offor's index to Bunyan's works. With this we may contrast Mr. Buchan's statement about the Scottish preachers of that day. 'If anyone has patience to labour through a dozen volumes of their sermons, he will be aghast at the childishness and irreverence of their teaching. Like an African witch-doctor "they smelled out" offenders, and they were the principal upstay of witch-burning.' So Dr. Ward writes of the Thirty Years' War in Germany: 'We hear to the last of the wholesale burning of witches—as if something must be done to balance the account with the author of evil. In the years 1627–8 the Bishop of Wurtzburg is said to have put to death 9000 witches or wizards, and between 1640 and 1641 nearly 1000 of these unfortunates are said to have been sent to the stake in the single Silesian Province of Neisse.'[2] Ford's play 'The Witch of Edmonton' was produced in 1623, and is evidence that the passion for witch-burning was strong in England also. Of all this superstition there is hardly a trace in Bunyan; of witchcraft or belief in witches,

[1] Buchan's *Montrose*, p. 63.
[2] *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iv. chap. xiv.

none; in 'The Life and Death of Mr. Badman' two or three silly stories are repeated from a current book of stories. We find also, as a matter of course, constant allusions to the manifold activities of devils, and Christian encounters them on his pilgrimage. But there is not a trace of belief that they have any power, save that which man concedes to them by his sins. They are, in fact, chained lions which harm only the souls that loose their chains. The saint has nothing to fear from them. At the end of a keenly contested dialogue between the sinner and Satan in 'The Saint's Knowledge of Christ's Love' we read: 'Satan, though I cannot think that God loves me; though I cannot think that God will save me; yet I will not yield to thee: for God can do more than I think He can. And whereas thou appealest unto me, whether, when I pray, my heart is not possessed with unbelief that God will not regard me; that shall not sink me neither; for God can do absolutely above what I ask or think.' The man who could pen these words had nothing to fear from the Devil. His victory was a complete victory. The contrast between 'Paradise Lost' and 'The Holy War' is worth noting. In Milton's poem Satan, though expelled from heaven, wins a notable victory over man. In 'The Holy War' Bunyan, while borrowing from 'Paradise Lost' the Council of the Fallen Angels and the flight of Satan to earth, never suffers us to doubt that the victory is with Emmanuel. Diabolus of 'The Holy War,' for all his thunderings, roarings, and craft, presents a sorry contrast with Milton's Satan.

But that which has secured vitality for Bunyan, and especially for the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' is the directness

with which he connects daily life with the supreme venture of faith. Bunyan moves all along in a very real world, and a very simple world. He makes us see that world. It is peopled with folk whom we know right well. Pliable, Obstinate, By-ends, Faithful, Hopeful, Greatheart, Mercy, Christian, and Christiana need no introduction. We have met them often enough, only Bunyan has seen through them more clearly than we have, and by one or two direct strokes of the pen gives us the satisfaction of feeling that it is we ourselves who have discovered their foibles and their virtues. As this neighbourly world is all around us, so each new scene is familiar at first sight. The Slough of Despond, the Wicket Gate, the Cross, the Interpreter's House, the Valley of Humiliation, the Castle of Giant Despair, the Delectable Mountains, the River of Death, and even the Celestial City are utterly homely to our souls. With John Bunyan himself we peep into the gates of the Celestial City, we see the streets of gold, we hear the music of the harpers, and we wish that the gates had not been closed against us. We know without being told it that we too have to set about that pilgrimage, that life is a matter for which each of us must make his own account to God. Each of us for himself must fly from the City of Destruction, must enter by the strait Gate on the narrow way, must stand at the foot of the Cross, must fight Apollyon, must cross the River, and enter on Eternal Life. This presentation of life strips it bare of the compromises and unrealities which obscure the true issue, the relation of God to the soul, and the steady maintenance of that relation as the great work of each

human being. Many, no doubt, and children especially, read the story as a pure story, and lose sight of its true purpose, or never come within view of it. But the fact remains, that for those who will receive it, there is set forth a plain and arresting picture of the Christian life. That picture, undoubtedly, seized the imagination of that large section of the English people, on whom sermons fall flat, and among whom the niceties of theological disputation never find their way. To 'The Pilgrim's Progress' and 'The Holy War' must be attributed a principal share in the continuance of vital religion among the peasantry and bourgeoisie of England.

Incidentally this religious spirit made a great contribution to political freedom. The child of God is bound to defeat all earthly tyrannies in the end. As member of his little self-governing community he gathers experience for the day when the aristocratic régime is to break up. He can win his freedom without the atheistic orgies of the French Revolution.

These, however, are by-products of the great work which was wrought through the simple piety and enlightened imagination of John Bunyan. Bunyan had no political end in view, sought nothing, desired nothing but the salvation of souls. Of him, as of the great Hebrew interpreter of dreams, it is fitting to say: 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.'

APPENDIX I

Bunyan and the Latitudinarians

It has fallen outside the design of this short work to correlate John Bunyan's teaching with many of the current controversies of his day, such as Justification by Faith, on which even Baxter and Owen were not agreed, or such as Baptismal Regeneration, or, again, such as the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But it should not be forgotten that the first of these questions brought him into conflict with Edward Fowler, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, who is reckoned among the Cambridge Platonists or Latitudinarians. Fowler is very indignant with the Tinker who dares to use such words as Characteristics, Diametrical, Parenthesis, Abstract, Replication, and so on. 'They smell,' he avers, 'of one whose name has had the honour to stand a little while in a Cambridge Buttery Book, and that hath had the luck sometimes to hear his masters chopping logic together.'

It may be freely conceded that had Bunyan's fame or vitality depended on this or similar controversies it would not have survived to our day. He was not a philosopher, nor for the matter of that a theologian. He was a Preacher, and an interpreter of the hearts and consciences of men, one to whom God had spoken through the Bible. He distrusted the 'carnal priests who muzzle up their people in ignorance with Aristotle, Plato and the rest of the heathenish philosophers, and preach little, if anything, of Christ rightly.'[1] The great school that flourished at Cambridge, the school of Cudworth, Whichcote, Smith

[1] *A Few Sighs from Hell.*

and More, of Jeremy Taylor, Stillingfleet, and Burnet, lived and moved in a world outside him. He did not in any sense influence it, nor was he influenced by it.

Even less was Bunyan concerned with the disputations that meant so much to Cosin, Hammond, Bull, or Thorndike, whom he would not have distinguished from Papists. He had his gift of God, which lay in another field than theirs, and his message was addressed to a larger world than any which these men reached. Yet, if it be true that *pectus facit theologum*, Bunyan was a theologian too, contemporary with, but wholly independent of, and extraneous to such influences.

APPENDIX II

Summary of the Millenary Petition presented to James I by the Puritans, 1603

(1) *The Church Service.*—Petition *against* the Cross in Baptism, interrogatories to infants, Confirmation, Baptism by women, use of cap and surplice, the terms Priest and Absolution, use of ring in marriage, teaching of popish opinions, bowing at the name of Jesus; *desiring* shortening of marriage service, sermon and examination before Communion, better observance of Lord's Day, less observance of Saints' Days.

(2) *Ministers.*—None but able and sufficient men to be ministers—required to preach diligently; non-preachers to be removed or required to maintain preachers; re-enactment of Edward VI's Act for lawfulness of marriage of ministers; subscription to be required only to the Thirty-nine Articles and King's Supremacy.

(3) *Livings, etc.*—Bishops to give up commendams (*i.e.* Deaneries, etc., held with Bishoprics); abolition of Pluralities; impropriations to be demised only to preachers or incumbents; lay impropriations to be charged with one-sixth or one-seventh of value for maintenance of preachers.

(4) *Discipline.*—Excommunications not to be pronounced by lay officials (*e.g.* Chancellors, etc.), and only with pastor's consent; abolition of extortionate fees and farming of fees, and of popish restrictions on times of marriage; shortening of suits in ecclesiastical courts; and more care in matter of marriage licences.

APPENDIX III

Table of Dates

1558. Accession of Elizabeth.	1559. Matthew Parker Abp.
1559. Act of Supremacy. Act of Uniformity.	
1563. Convocation: Thirty-nine Articles.	1575. Grindal Abp.
1583. Activity of High Commission.	1583. Whitgift Abp.
1587. Execution of Mary Queen of Scots.	
1588. Armada.	
1594. First four books of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*.	
1597. Second edition containing fifth book.	
1600. Death of Hooker.	
1603. Accession of James I.	
1603. Millenary Petition.	
1604. Hampton Court Conference.	1604. Bancroft Abp.
1605. Gunpowder Plot.	
1611. Authorized Version of Bible.	1610. Abbot Abp.
1616. Death of Shakespeare.	
1618. *Book of Sports* published.	

1619. Death of Bp. Overal, Cosin's great master.
1625. Accession of Charles I.
1627. Suspension of Abp. Abbot.
1628. Petition of Right in Charles I's Third Parliament.
1628. Birth of Bunyan.
1630. Savage punishment of Leighton.
1633. Communion Tables placed altarwise.
1633. Laud Abp.
1634. First Ship-money writ.
1634–7. Laud's Visitation.
1637. Hampden's Trial.
1637. Prayer Book Riot in Scotland.
1640. Scots seize Newcastle.
1640. Long Parliament. Grand Remonstrance. Irish Rebellion.
1644–7. Bunyan on military service.
1645. Prayer Book abolished by Parliament
1645. Siege of Leicester.
1645. Execution of Laud.
1647. Charles sold by Scots.
1649. Execution of Charles I.
1650. Bedford Meeting formed.
1651–4. Period of Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*.
1653. Cromwell's Instrument. Commonwealth.
1655. Bunyan a minister.
1656. Controversy with Quakers.
1658. Parliament dissolved.
1658. Death of Cromwell.
1660. Restoration of Charles II.
1660. Juxon Abp.
1661–5. Clarendon Code.
1663. Sheldon Abp.
1665. Plague.
1665. Bunyan's *Holy City*.
1666. Fire of London.
1667. *Paradise Lost*.
1670. Treaty of Dover. *Paradise Regained*.

1670. *Samson Agonistes.*	
1672. Test Act.	
1673. Marriage of James II to a Roman Catholic.	
1678. Popish Plot.	1678. Sancroft Abp.
	1678. *Pilgrim's Progress*, Pt. I.
1679. Habeas Corpus Act.	
1680. Agitation of Exclusion Bill.	1680. *Life and Death of Mr. Badman.*
	1682. *The Holy War.*
1685. Accession of James II. Monmouth's Rebellion.	1685. *Pilgrim's Progress*, Pt. II.
1688. Trial of the seven Bishops for petitioning against Declaration of Indulgence.	
1688. Flight of James II.	1688. *The Jerusalem Sinner saved.* Death of Bunyan.

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